Moving the learning forward: From incremental to transformational impact on empowering smallholder farmers and women

Impact Assessment of the Agricultural Marketing Initiative, West Nile, Uganda

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Capstone Report

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Additionally, this project could not have been accomplished without the support and guidance of our stellar faculty advisor, Dr. David Gow, who assisted, encouraged and challenged us to think outside conventional approaches throughout the past year. His feedback during the research analysis was critical in helping to strengthen this report. Finally, we wish to thank the hundreds of farmers in the Arua district who took considerable time from their demanding daily activities to share their experiences and aspirations with us. Without their willingness to speak with us, this project would not have been possible. We hope that this research brings attention to the various challenges these farmers confront, as well as contributes to shaping more effective interventions that can improve the prospects of advancing their well-being and empowerment.
# List of Acronyms

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>AMI</td>
<td>Agricultural Marketing Initiative</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIDA</td>
<td>Canadian International Development Agency</td>
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<td>CREAM</td>
<td>Consultancy for Rural Enterprise Activity Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>GTZ</td>
<td>German Technical Cooperation</td>
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<tr>
<td>M&amp;E</td>
<td>Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAADS</td>
<td>National Agricultural Advisory Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organization</td>
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<td>PRA</td>
<td>Participatory Reflection and Action</td>
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<td>SII</td>
<td>Strategic Impact Inquiry for Women’s Empowerment</td>
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<td>WEA</td>
<td>Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture</td>
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Executive Summary

The northern region of Uganda, including the West Nile region, suffers from a greater degree of poverty than the rest of the country. The majority of this region’s inhabitants rely on small-scale agricultural activities as their principal livelihood strategy. Smallholder farmers in northern Uganda face serious challenges in terms of a lack of agricultural inputs, poor infrastructure, and inaccessibility to credit and commodity markets, which together constrain their ability to earn higher levels of income. Additionally, women traditionally bear the majority of the work burden for farming tasks, performing approximately 80% of all agricultural activities. Yet, they are unable to exercise equal control within household decision making over income earned from the sale of crops or regarding land use, given that men alone have traditionally been able to own land in Uganda according to customary practice (CARE, 2005). Renewed development efforts over the past decade or so in Sub-Saharan Africa have attempted to organize a larger number of smallholder farmers, especially women, into producer organizations, in order to build their capacity to produce and market cash crops collectively to chain buyers. Such interventions aim to enable smallholder farmers to benefit from economies of scale, overcome high transactions costs and improve the quality standards of their crops, so that they are better positioned to forge linkages with commercial buyers.

CARE Uganda’s Agricultural Marketing Initiative (AMI) was a three-year pilot project beginning in 2004, and was supported financially by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) through CARE Canada. It was implemented in the Arua and Nebbi districts of the West Nile region of Uganda. The goal of the AMI project was to transform approximately 3,000 smallholder farmers, who were mainly cultivating sesame for subsistence purposes, into commercial farmers through the introduction and promotion of a demand-driven private sector approach to sesame production and marketing. The AMI project’s other objectives were to: i) partner with an agri-business organization (Nile Pro) and support it to become a viable intermediary institution to manage market linkages between farmer producers and a buyer; ii) support the formation and development of smallholder farmer associations; and iii) promote women’s participation in household and community-level decision making (CARE, 2007a).

Objectives of Study

The George Washington University Capstone research team collaborated with CARE USA and CARE Uganda to conduct an ex-post impact assessment of the AMI project. The principal objective of the study was to complement CARE’s “Strategic Impact Inquiry for Women’s Empowerment” (SII framework) and ongoing “A Place to Grow” organizational learning agendas, in order to determine the impacts the project produced on women’s empowerment and gender equality. Specifically, the three research questions explored during this study were:

1) How has the AMI project contributed to the empowerment of women farmers?
   a) In terms of their ability to exercise decision making power at the household (HH) level?
   b) In terms of their ability to control income earned from the commercial sale of sesame?

2) How did CARE's policies, processes, capacity building efforts, relations with local communities, and norms assist the AMI project to, or constrain it from addressing women’s empowerment and gender equality?
3) What effect has the AMI project had on building the sustained capacity of smallholder farmer groups?
   a) In terms of farmers’ ability to engage in the collective marketing of sesame?
   b) In terms of farmers’ ability to provide for the livelihood security of their families?
   c) Has the project produced different impacts on men and women farmers?

**Methodology**

During March 2009, the research team traveled to Uganda to conduct field research during the course of nine days, in rural areas of the Arua district in the West Nile region. During the research, the team visited nine villages in three sub-counties of Arua: Rhino Camp, Uleppi and Ogoko (see Annex 2). Preliminary findings were presented to various CARE country office managers at the Circle of Learning Workshop on women’s empowerment and gender equality in Entebbe, Uganda.

The research team chose to primarily employ qualitative data collection methods in this impact assessment. The reason for this was to shed further light on the changes that had occurred as a result of the AMI project by going beyond the mainly quantitative indicators used in the monitoring and evaluation efforts during the project. The data collection tools used included: i) semi-structured interviews with farmers; ii) semi-structured key informant interviews with leaders of farmer groups and marketing committees; iii) semi-structured interviews with former AMI staff at CARE and local partner organizations (Nile Pro and the Consultancy for Rural Enterprise Activity Management); iv) separate group discussions with male and female farmers; and v) two Participatory Reflection and Action (PRA) activities with farmers—resource cards and a variant of trend analysis. In total, the research team interviewed approximately 300 farmers and 8 former AMI staff members and field agents.

**Key Findings**

The following are the key findings for each of the three broad research questions:

**A. AMI’s Impact on Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality**

- There has been a moderate strengthening of joint household decision making over the use of household income to save and purchase medium and large assets (e.g. bicycles, radios, cows, goats and chickens).
- However, women have not been able to gain significant influence in joint household decision making regarding the sale of these medium and large assets.
- Women's leadership roles in farmer groups (e.g. treasurer, secretary, vice chairperson, chairperson) have increased. However, the majority of women chairpersons or vice chairpersons are leaders of women-only or predominantly-female groups.
- There has been an increased level of responsiveness to and integration of women’s interests in most farmer groups.

**B. CARE’s Support of Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality**

- The AMI project’s objectives relating to women’s empowerment were designed at the urging of the donor organization, rather than having been informed by any internal policy at CARE Uganda regarding gender or women’s empowerment in agricultural projects.
• The project’s strategy for promoting women’s empowerment was limited in its scope, and did not intend to change structural inequalities that contribute to rural women’s disempowerment and gender inequality.
• The project’s focus on promoting women’s group membership and household decision making power was not effective in fostering women’s empowerment within the structural and relational dimensions.
• The gender training component had a limited impact on strengthening women’s empowerment and gender equality.
• CARE and partner organization staff lacked sufficient technical capacity and a coherent framework to implement comprehensive gender-sensitive activities.

C. AMI’s Impact on Farmer Group Capacity and Livelihood Security
• Farmers had a high level of adoption of improved agronomic practices that enhanced sesame productivity.
• Farmers increased their sesame productivity and area of land cultivated during the project, but they are still greatly constrained by a lack of time- and labor-saving tools.
• Most farmers possessed a weak knowledge of collective marketing and record keeping skills, partially due to insufficient training received.
• The strength of market linkages established between sesame farmers and the buyer, UNO, was fairly weak during the project due to: i) farmers’ lack of bargaining power in negotiating prices; ii) time delay involved in the collective marketing process was sometimes too long for farmers due to pressing household needs; iii) lack of storage facilities for sesame; iv) weak communication channels between farmer groups and marketing committees; and v) inability of farmer groups to hold leaders and marketing committees accountable.
• Farmer groups and the intermediary organization, Nile Pro, lacked the capacity to ensure the post-project viability of market chain linkages in the sesame sub-sector.
• The majority of farmers earned slightly higher incomes during the AMI project, which somewhat improved their ability to provide for their most important livelihood needs. However, this has not been sustained since the end of the project.

Recommendations
• Foster the development of holistic approaches to women’s empowerment and gender equality from the project design phase
• Encourage the formulation of a balanced set of gender-sensitive and participatory project objectives, and monitoring and evaluation indicators
• Build the capacity of CARE country office and implementing partner organization staff to pursue women’s empowerment and gender equality
• Encourage balancing CARE’s institutional mission regarding women’s empowerment with external donor priorities
• Establish incentives and accountability mechanisms to encourage CARE staff to emphasize women’s empowerment and gender equality within projects
• Reduce the dependency of farmer project participants on CARE
• Integrate middlemen as potential agents value chain marketing activities
Part I: Introduction and Background

A. Problem Statement

Since coming to power in 1986, President Yoweri Museveni has done much to improve Uganda’s economic position. Specifically, he enacted a Poverty Eradication Action Plan in 1997 that is focused on economic growth, good governance and raising the income and quality of life of those living in poverty (GoU, 2000). Due to these efforts, the GDP growth rate of Uganda has averaged around 6% since the early 1990s and the poverty rate dropped to 35% in 2001, from 56% in 1992. However, while economic conditions have improved, much still remains to be done to address poverty in Uganda. To begin with, per capita income was approximately $270 US dollars as of 2006, and life expectancy at birth was 48 years as of 2008. Uganda is ranked 154th in the UNDP’s Human Development Index, thereby placing it among the poorest countries in the world. Further, the northern region of Uganda suffers from a greater degree of poverty than the rest of the country. The majority of this region’s inhabitants rely on small-scale agricultural activities for their subsistence and livelihood. Rural farmers in the northern region in particular, and throughout the country in general, face serious challenges in terms of a lack of agricultural inputs, poor infrastructure, and inaccessibility to credit and markets, which all serve to perpetuate their poverty. Additionally, women have borne the majority of the work burden for farming tasks and perform approximately 80% of all agricultural activities. Yet they are unable to exercise equal control within household decision making over income earned from the sale of crops or regarding land use, given that men alone have traditionally been able to own land in Uganda according to customary practice (CARE, 2005).

B. Client

A leader in international development, CARE is a non-governmental organization (NGO) committed to fighting poverty worldwide, and has particularly focused many intervention areas on women and girls. It was founded in 1945 to provide relief to WWII survivors. Since then, CARE’s mission has expanded to address the underlying causes of poverty by providing assistance in various sectors such as agriculture and natural resource management, economic development, HIV/AIDS, and emergency relief - to name a few. CARE’s agriculture and natural resource management sector programming focuses on ensuring food security and enabling higher income generation through the utilization of improved seed varieties to increase yield, animal husbandry, and environmentally-sustainable home gardening and irrigation. Currently CARE is operating in over 42 countries and has worked with over 1.2 million farmers (CARE, n.d.).
C. The AMI Project

The Agricultural Marketing Initiative (AMI) was a three-year pilot project beginning in 2004, and was supported financially by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) through CARE Canada. It was implemented by CARE Uganda in the Arua and Nebbi districts of the West Nile region in Uganda. The goal of the AMI project was to transform approximately 3,000 farmers, who were mainly cultivating sesame for subsistence purposes, into commercial farmers through the introduction and promotion of a demand-driven private sector approach to sesame production and marketing. In order to accomplish this goal, the AMI project provided farmers with inputs and various types of capacity building training, and also worked to improve market linkages between these farmers and buyers in the sesame value chain. While the exact project activities and objectives pursued continued to evolve over the course of the project, by midway through, the project sought to achieve the following objectives (CARE, 2007a):

1. To set-up a viable agri-business intermediary institution to promote commercial farming by initiating and managing market linkages between farmer producers and a buyer;
2. To support the formation and development of smallholder producer groups and marketing committees that effectively link up and negotiate with buyers within the sesame sub-sector, as well as advocate for improved marketing services from the government and other stakeholders; and
3. To support and promote women’s participation in household and community-level decision making by increasing women’s access to and control over income and other assets.

To achieve these objectives, CARE identified two private sector partners: Nile Pro and UNO. Nile Pro was chosen to be the intermediary agri-business organization tasked with the following: i) creating linkages between the buyer of sesame and farmer groups; ii) working with the CARE staff to facilitate the provision of seed credit to farmers and the marketing of sesame; and iii) providing training to farmers in agricultural techniques, post-harvest management and quality control. UNO was the private sector buyer that CARE formed a contractual partnership with to purchase sesame in bulk from the farmer groups. During the AMI project, UNO was responsible for: i) providing weighing machines; ii) paying the rental fees for parish-level collection centers where farmer groups were to bulk and store sesame until the time of purchase, iii) providing means of transportation for Nile Pro staff to travel to parishes to collect bulked sesame; and iv) purchasing bulked sesame from farmer groups at a price no lower than the “gate price”, or the highest prevailing market price for the crop.

CARE was responsible for: i) mobilizing farmers into new groups and reorganizing already-existing farmer associations; ii) financing the supply of sesame seeds; and iii) providing logistical support to Nile Pro to strengthen its capacity to provide extension services and act as the intermediary organization. CARE also contracted the services of the Consultancy for Rural Enterprise Activity Management (CREAM), a local rural development organization, which
provided training to participating farmer groups in marketing, group dynamics and gender issues. The AMI project also required that farmer groups elect representatives to serve as members of marketing committees that operated at the parish level. These committees were responsible for supporting the collective marketing process among all farmer groups in their parish. Specifically, they were tasked with managing the sesame bulking process within the parish collection centers, and the marketing process. The parish-level farmer marketing committees were thus a key player in creating and sustaining the market linkages between UNO and the farmer groups.

D. Objectives of Study

The George Washington University Capstone research team collaborated with CARE USA and CARE Uganda to conduct an ex-post impact assessment of the AMI project. This study was designed to build on the previous evaluations and project reviews conducted by CARE Uganda during the AMI project, in order to further examine the types of impact the project had on farmer participants.

The principal objective of the study was to complement CARE’s ongoing “Strategic Impact Inquiry for Women’s Empowerment” (SII framework) and “A Place to Grow” organizational learning agendas. These two initiatives aim to holistically assess how CARE’s general programming and its agricultural projects in particular have impacted women’s empowerment and gender equality at the field level. Building on these efforts, the present study in part sought to assess the degree to which the AMI project has promoted the empowerment of women farmers at the household and farmer group levels, both during the project and with regards to longer-term impact. The findings are intended to provide CARE Uganda with additional insight into how its organizational and project-level approaches have contributed to advancing women’s empowerment and gender equality. Further, it is also hoped that the lessons and recommendations that emerge from this part of the study will be of value to other CARE country offices when designing their future agricultural projects, in order to produce more sustained impacts on women’s empowerment and gender equality.

The second broad objective of this assessment was to determine the impact that the AMI project has had on developing the capacity of smallholder farmer groups to engage in successful commercial production and marketing of sesame. In particular, the research team sought to assess the post-project sustainability of market linkages established during AMI. Lastly, the third objective was to assess the impact that the project has had on improving the income levels and well-being of men and women farmers within households. The report also presents the key findings on these two objectives, and provides recommendations to CARE on how it can better position its value chain agricultural projects to support sustained marketing capacity and livelihood improvements among smallholder farmers.
Part II: Literature Review

A. Smallholder Farmers and Markets

Context of Smallholder Farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa

A large percentage of people living in poverty in the developing world depend upon agriculture, and about 60 to 90% of smallholder farmers are considered to be poor or very poor (Whitehead & Kabeer, 1999). Thus, it is critical for rural development interventions to address the complex challenges that poor farmers face in improving their livelihoods. The literature is vast on the difficulties that smallholder farmers in developing countries encounter, in part due to their isolation from markets and the diseconomies of scale involved in their small areas of land cultivated and quantity of crops produced. This situation is particularly acute for farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa, where very poor rural infrastructure and roads present additional barriers that increase farmers’ transaction costs in the sale of surplus crops in the market.

The context of market liberalization in the developing world over the past two decades is important for understanding the increasing constraints that impede smallholder farmers from securing their livelihoods. Structural adjustment policies during the 1980s and 1990s adopted by governments across Sub-Saharan Africa served to reduced public investment in rural infrastructure, input subsidies and agricultural extension, thereby diminishing economic support to smallholder farmers (Royal Tropical Institute, Faidi MaLai & IIRR, 2006). Prior to this period, most African governments extensively, albeit perversely, intervened in state-operated marketing boards, through which they fixed commodity prices, acted as the provider of all subsidized inputs to farmers, and purchased produce from farmer cooperatives that bulked agricultural commodities (Varangis & Schreiber, 2001 in Onumah, Davis, Kleih, & Proctor 2007). However, by the 1980s it became clear that these state interventions in the agricultural sector exacted an immense fiscal burden on African governments, and contributed to the decline of real prices earned by farmers (Hubbard, 2003 in Onumah et al., 2007).

While the liberalization reforms pursued in the 1980s and 1990s ushered private-sector actors into agricultural commodity markets, they have over time produced fairly mixed to negative impacts on smallholder farmers (Royal Tropical Institute et al., 2006). Farmers have had to contend with declining prices because of longer supply chains and increased market transportation costs that are no longer borne by state marketing boards. They have also been susceptible to inconsistent market access and fluctuating commodity prices (Onumah et al., 2007). Further, many smallholder farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa, and Uganda in particular, are only able to produce small surpluses beyond their household consumption needs, which they generally are compelled to sell to rural traders at low prices. This is largely due to farmers’ inability to guarantee consistent commodity quality standards, and their lack of bargaining power in the sale of small quantities. Other smallholder farmers produce larger quantities of surplus crops, but face significant constraints in terms of their ability to transport them to markets.
(Robbins, et al., n.d.). Furthermore, these farmers lack access to facilitating market institutions, and have been susceptible to fluctuating commodity prices (Onumah et al., 2007), as well as high transaction costs and coordination problems due to asymmetric information (Shiferaw, Obare & Muricho, 2008).

**Smallholder Collective Production and Marketing**

To address these various obstacles and in order to advance the commercialization of smallholder agriculture in Sub-Saharan Africa, over the past decade or so, governments, development agencies and NGOs have sought to re-organize smallholder farmers into producer organizations, and to build their capacity to engage in collective marketing (Onumah et al., 2007). There is a range of roles that such smallholder producer associations play, as well as the means through which they are formed. Some of these farmer organizations are promoted and/or created directly by donors or NGOs, others by private-sector actors, while others are established autonomously by farmers themselves. Some are formed through the intervention of a combination of these actors. Such producer organizations generally aim to build the capacity of smallholder farmers to achieve some or all of the following objectives: to collectively obtain market information and skills; to share resources; to access credit and extension services; to collectively bulk produce to meet a buyer’s volume needs; to be able to better guarantee a consistent supply and quality standard according to buyers’ requirements; and to improve market coordination. The strategy of building the skills and capacity of producer organizations is oriented towards enabling farmers to increase their competitiveness, to produce crops for pre-identified markets (rather than to simply sell what they have produced), and to enhance market opportunities and earned income for farmers (Royal Tropical Institute et al., 2006).

Producer organizations that are well organized and governed can therefore facilitate the commercialization of smallholder agricultural production (Shiferaw et al., 2008). In this way, most producer organizations are intended to allow farmers to act collectively to increase economies of scale, engage in collective marketing activities and reduce transaction costs along the marketing value chain. Through these strategies, farmer organizations create greater incentives for other actors and buyers in the value chain to engage with them directly. Value chains differ from supply chains in that each actor in a chain invests in it to support other actors, in a way that is mutually beneficial to all involved (Royal Tropical Institute et al., 2006).

Efforts to create more effective marketing linkages within agricultural value chains have become an integral part of national rural development and poverty alleviation strategies in many Sub-Saharan African countries. The approach used by many interventions with collective producer groups centers on connecting smallholder farmers of cash crops to large chain buyers or exporters. While this strategy may create market linkages, most often farmers are unable to effectively participate or negotiate within them (Kaaria, Njuki, Abenakyo, Delve & Sanginga, 2008). Smallholder producer groups have the greatest opportunity to succeed when they are autonomously managed by farmers, when farmer members are able to actively participate in decision making, and when collective action is able to reduce transaction costs (Shiferaw et al.,
Thus, empowering smallholder farmers and strengthening the leadership of their organizations are critical for ensuring the sustainability of these organizations, particularly when outside agencies have facilitated market linkages. To this end, it is important for development agencies acting as intermediaries to invest in building the human capital of smallholder farmers in numeracy, management and marketing skills, and to help create a viable and sustainable business model (Kaaria et al., 2008; Coulter, 2007). In particular, marketing knowledge is perhaps the most crucial factor in determining whether or not farmer groups will be able to access input and commodity markets over the long-run after a project has ended (Kaaria et al., 2008). Producer organizations’ sustainability is further enhanced when they have access to storage facilities and credit services, and when they can establish strong relationships with actors further along the value chain (Coulter, 2007).

Unfortunately, for many decades and still today, the effectiveness of such associations in linking African smallholder farmers to market services and actors has been limited (Hussi et al., 1993 in Shiferaw et al., 2008). For one, most farmer associations are characterized by high levels of dependency on NGOs and donors. The imperatives of project-based timeframes and funding cycles often compel development organizations to play an overly interventionist role as an intermediary in the chain, rather than to enable farmer organizations to engage in necessary activities themselves. This tendency runs the risk of undermining the collective marketing efforts when the outside organization leaves at the end of a project, if the farmer organizations are not well positioned to take over. In such cases, the departure of the donor agency or NGO amounts to the removal of a key link in the value chain, thereby dismantling the initial efforts (Royal Tropical Institute et al., 2006). Further, smallholder farmer groups have for the most part been unable to benefit from lasting linkages with market institutions from which they can obtain needed information on commodity volume demands, or where they can negotiate with competing buyers. Thus, even when farmer groups are able to engage in successful marketing during the life of a project, concerns about the long-term sustainability of these interventions often persist (Onumah et al., 2007).

Smallholder Farmers and Sesame Production in West Nile, Uganda

The agricultural sector makes up the bulk of the Ugandan economy, where approximately 80% of the labor force is engaged in livelihood strategies (World Factbook, 2009). The sector predominantly consists of small-scale agriculture, where crops such as coffee, cotton, sesame, tobacco, flowers, cassava, potatoes, millet and peanuts are produced for both national and international markets. Due to increasingly apparent environmental degradation, as well as recently depressed international markets for several of these crops, in recent years the Government of Uganda has been promoting the commercialization and cultivation of non-traditional crops, including sesame, as part of its Plan for the Modernization of Agriculture.

Sesame has traditionally been farmed for household consumption in the West Nile region of Uganda, and women have played the central role in its cultivation (CARE, 2003). The crop is particularly suited to the climatic and soil conditions of the West Nile. Traditionally, the brown variety, referred to as sesame II, has been grown in the area for many years. However, the
National Agricultural Research Organization of Uganda recently developed several new genotypes that produce higher yields, including a white variety of sesame, known as sesame II, as well as another variety that produces both brown and white seeds. Both varieties are sought by exporters, as there is high market demand for sesame I in East Asia and the Middle East, and for sesame II in European countries. Currently, Uganda is the world’s third-largest producer of sesame (CARE, 2003).

The numerous challenges articulated in the previous section on smallholder farmers are all prevalent in the West Nile region of Uganda, and impede sesame farmers from realizing improved incomes through the commercial production and marketing of sesame. Not mentioned earlier is the fact that sesame producers from the West Nile region had, until recently, failed to tap into existing niche markets for sesame, including in the organic sector (CARE, 2003). The government of Uganda, international development agencies and national NGOs have in recent years undertaken several initiatives to strengthen the commercial production of sesame in the West Nile. These include promoting the formation of sesame producer organizations and the rehabilitation of essential market infrastructure such as roads and grain collection centers. Additionally, the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS), a government agency, has been working for several years in this region of Uganda to improve linkages between value chain actors and to decentralize agricultural extension service delivery. It has attempted to shift the authority over the provision of extension services to the sub-county government level, as well as to bring in private sector actors, and increase the participation of farmers in all planning and development decisions. It is unclear how effective these efforts have been to date.

B. Household Livelihood Security

It is necessary to define various models of the “household” and describe the ways in which the term is often operationalized within the context of smallholder farmers. Economics and development literature have in the past decade recognized that rather than being a seamless or unified whole, households are more accurately sites where competing interests intersect in unpredictable ways (Whitehead & Kabeer, 1999). This literature has sought to move away from models of the household that emphasize sharing, altruism, and cooperation, to those that include the possibility of greater negotiation and bargaining among husbands, wives and other family members (Dunn & Chen, 1996). Key factors that play a role in influencing the relative bargaining power that each household member possesses, include individual ownership of assets such as land, “communal/external support systems, or social norms and institutions, or perceptions about contributions and needs” (Agarwal, 1997, p. 7). However, it is also important to recognize that in addition to negotiation and bargaining dynamics, there are indeed often areas of shared interest within households. Thus, both pooling and independence of income may take place among family members (Whitehead & Kabeer, 1999).

The concept of household livelihood security is defined in a straightforward yet comprehensive manner by Chambers (1989):
Livelihoods are secure when households have secure ownership of, or access to, resources and income earning activities, including reserves and assets, to off-set risks, ease shocks, and meet contingencies. (p. 7)

Further, a more comprehensive livelihoods approach is needed to understand the various strategies that smallholder households pursue to meet their diverse economic and social needs (Duunn & Chen, 1996). Households often engage in a range of productive activities to meet different livelihood needs such as immediate well-being and longer-term maintenance. These activities often include non-farm income-earning activities. This is particularly true of men and women farmers in the Arua district of the West Nile region (Whitehead & Kabeer, 1999). For most smallholder households in Sub-Saharan Africa, subsistence consumption is the main source of livelihood, followed by both crop sales and non-farm labor (IFAD, 2002).

C. Gender and Agriculture in Uganda

Within many households in sub-Saharan Africa, including in Northern Uganda, cultural norms about women’s productive and reproductive roles tend to dictate that women primarily produce for subsistence and local markets, that they produce lower value commodities on smaller plots of land, and that they face persistent barriers to accessing capital and agricultural inputs (Quisumbing, 1996). Women farmers also confront additional structural constraints in terms of their ability to access and own land, and to engage with and benefit from marketing channels (Whitehead & Kabeer, 1999). Furthermore, women generally do not enjoy equal access to opportunities to diversify their income, and also often shoulder a larger workload than men. All of these factors contribute to reproducing inequalities in both the intra-household allocation of resources between men and women, as well as in their prospects for safeguarding livelihood security.

In terms of sesame production in Uganda, women have traditionally provided the majority of the labor input for sesame cultivation in the West Nile region. This includes in undertaking activities such as sowing, weeding, threshing, as well as in the marketing and sale of sesame. Although men have traditionally only been responsible for constructing drying poles in sesame cultivation, they generally collect and control the income derived from the sale of sesame. This situation likely owes to sesame’s relatively new status as a key cash crop in this region of Uganda, as compared to its traditional cultivation for subsistence purposes alone (CARE, 2003). A great deal of literature on gender in intra-household dynamics within Sub-Saharan Africa concludes that when crops which are traditionally controlled by women enter the market as an important cash crop, men are likely to take over these commodities, and to control the income earned from their sale (Kaaria & Ashby, 2001; IFAD, 2002). Such processes further negatively impact women, by reducing their control over income earned from crops.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that Uganda fares better than many of its East African neighbors in terms of the degree to which women are able to retain control over income from such low value crops as cassava, beans and sweet potatoes. In terms of sesame production, women cultivate the crop on small plots of land belonging to their husbands. They are sometimes
able to keep the income earned from its sale, and generally use it to purchase food, utensils and other household items, while men traditionally pay for such household expenses as school fees, medical care and clothing (IFAD, 2002). However, the literature notes that women often contribute substantially to all of these latter household needs as well, given that men are prone to spend their income on “drinking, smoking, prostitutes and marrying additional wives” (IFAD, p. 39).

The barriers that Ugandan women face in accessing and controlling land require further exploration. While women’s ability to own land is safeguarded by national laws, in practice these rights are constrained. The main obstacle at work is the salience of customary law, which takes precedence over national legislation within rural communities, and which ties a woman’s right to access and own land to her relationship with her husband. Thus, customary practice dictates that many rural women cannot possess secure land titles. However, men often grant them informal entitlement to the land (Whitehead & Kabeer, 1999). But in the case of divorce, the husband often takes possession of all land belonging to the household. Further, in the event that a husband dies before his wife, his family may repossess the land, leaving his widow homeless. Therefore, female-headed households in Uganda are particularly disadvantaged in their ability to access and own land (Majtenyi, 2005). In sum, while women in Uganda do seem to enjoy better treatment and greater rights than those in other Sub-Saharan African countries, much remains to be done to ensure their equality vis-à-vis men in practice. They have yet to benefit fully from the codified rights provided to them in international law and in the Ugandan constitution.

It is thus crucial that interventions which aim to enhance smallholder farmers’ access to market linkages, take into account the diverse and complex ways in which gender often mediates the benefits that women and men are able to accrue from the market. Those initiatives which do not fully recognize such dynamics or attempt to redress them, are likely to exacerbate the marginalization and inequalities that women farmers in Africa already face (Kaaria et al., 2008).

D. Women’s Empowerment

Since the mid-1990s, the agenda of women’s empowerment has been increasingly adopted as an objective by international NGOs and development agencies. Feminist as well as gender and development literature broadly define empowerment as women’s enhanced abilities to make decisions and exercise control over areas of importance in their lives. In particular, Kabeer’s (1999) holistic understanding of women’s empowerment consists of three dimensions: i) the material, human and social resources that better enable women to make choices; ii) the exercising of agency, as the processes by which women define their aspirations and pursue them through direct decisions, negotiation and manipulation; and iii) achievements, as the concrete outcomes that signify improvements in women’s lives. Further, empowerment has been understood both as an end-goal to be pursued, as well as a complex and ongoing process of change that involves women’s enhanced ability to exercise agency and choice (Malhotra, Schuler & Boender, 2002; Kabeer 1999).
A feminist understanding of women’s empowerment also envisions the term to mean a process of change at both the individual and broader societal levels that produces more equitable changes in the power dynamics between women and those with whom they interact (Oxaal & Baden, 1997). First, women’s agency can be thought of as partly relating to their ability to exercise *power within*, by having the self-confidence to be able to form new types of aspirations, as well as *power to* make decisions over resources and pursue necessary actions to achieve their goals. While change at the individual level is often conceived of as most critical within the range of definitions of women’s empowerment, conditions at the household, community and societal macro-levels also need to be assessed in order to understand how women’s abilities to make certain decisions are shaped by gendered social norms and institutional structures that prescribe the outer boundaries of women’s roles (Pradhan, 2003).

**CARE and Women’s Empowerment**

CARE has been concerned with addressing the needs of women and girls within its programmatic interventions for more than a decade. As mentioned earlier, within the past few years CARE has launched concerted organizational efforts that specifically seek to strengthen the ability of its projects to effectively advance women’s empowerment. The cornerstone of this work is the “Strategic Impact Inquiry on Women’s Empowerment” (2006) [SII framework], which articulates the organization’s conceptual framework for understanding the process and outcome of women’s empowerment.

Drawing extensively from feminist theory and literature, the SII framework conceptually maps various meanings of women’s empowerment as both a process and an outcome. Slightly different from Kabeer’s three components of women’s empowerment discussed above, the SII framework defines women’s empowerment to consist of the three inter-connected dimensions of *agency* (which includes aspirations, resources and achievement), *relations* (types of social interactions and women’s means of negotiation within them), and *structure* (institutions and the way in which gendered power structures are reproduced or contested). Next, within each of these three dimensions of agency, relations and structure, the framework articulates various sub-dimensions of women’s empowerment, as well as more concrete suggested areas of focus by which to measure them.

The “Place to Grow: Bringing women to the center of CARE’s agricultural programs—Conceptual underpinnings and assessment framework” (2008) builds on the original SII framework to create the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture (WEA) framework, which specifically addresses CARE’s agricultural sector. The WEA framework’s pillars are the same three dimensions of women’s empowerment that constitute the SII framework. However, the sub-dimensions are tailored to specifically address the context of women in agriculture. Given that both the SII and the WEA frameworks present comprehensive conceptual tools with which to understand and assess CARE’s programmatic interventions to advance women’s empowerment, this present study drew on them extensively to shape the research methodology with regards to the gender-focused objective.
Part III: Research Questions

The research team designed the impact assessment to address the following three research questions pertaining to the AMI project:

1. How has the project contributed to the empowerment of women farmers?
   a. In terms of their ability to exercise decision making power at the household (HH) level?
   b. In terms of their ability to control income earned from the commercial sale of sesame?
2. How did CARE’s policies, processes, capacity building efforts, relations with local communities, and norms assist the AMI project to or constrain it from addressing women’s empowerment and gender equality?
3. What effect has the project had on building the sustained capacity of smallholder farmer groups?
   a. In terms of farmers’ ability to engage in the collective marketing of sesame?
   b. In terms of farmers’ ability to provide for the livelihood security of their families?
   c. Has the project produced different impacts on men and women farmers?

Part IV: Methodology

The research team conducted the impact assessment in Northern Uganda in March, 2009. The methodological framework devised not only aimed to examine the AMI project’s stated objective regarding women’s empowerment, but also to use the two learning agenda frameworks discussed earlier as a point of departure to explore impacts on women’s empowerment in a more holistic manner. In order to provide further specificity to the three broad research questions, the capstone team developed the sub-questions outlined above. In addition, relevant and appropriate indicators were developed for research questions one and three. The indicators for question one were mainly drawn from the areas of interest within the sub-dimensions of women’s empowerment presented in the SII and the WEA frameworks (see Annex 1 for table of selected dimensions, sub-dimensions and indicators of women’s empowerment examined under research question one). The indicators for research question three were developed by the research team following the desk review of academic and practitioner literature on smallholder agriculture and livelihood security (also see Annex 1 for all indicators).

Based on several key factors, the research team chose to emphasize the use of qualitative data collection methods. Qualitative research methods can be better suited to capturing how project participants themselves define the concepts of empowerment and change. In fact, the SII framework encourages CARE staff to incorporate qualitative, holistic and participatory
approaches when conducting project-level research to determine impact on women’s empowerment and gender equality. It states:

Gender, power, equity, and equality are all complex, many-faceted phenomena resisting simple quantification. As a result, we believe it preferable to err on the side of impact research that starts with women’s own voices, interpretations, meanings, indicators, and judgments rather than research that seeks to pigeonhole women into frames imposed from the outside. (CARE, 2006a, p. 11)

In this way, the research sought, when possible and appropriate, to elicit women’s own definitions of their empowerment, and to assess participants’ perceptions of how the AMI project had affected this outcome and process. The methodology was also guided by the fundamental understanding that gender dynamics require a nuanced conception of complex dynamics that quantitative tools alone are unable to capture. Furthermore, the research team reasoned that qualitative tools would reveal different insights for all three of the study’s research questions, than had the previous AMI performance evaluations, which had primarily employed quantitative methods.

The data collection tools used in this study included: i) semi-structured interviews with both male and female farmers; ii) semi-structured key informant interviews with leaders of farmer and marketing committees; iii) semi-structured interviews with CARE, Nile Pro and CREAM staff who worked on the AMI project; iv) separate group discussions with male and female farmers; and v) two Participatory Reflection and Action (PRA) tools— resource cards and a variant of trend analysis (also see Annex 1 for table of data collection tools used to address each research question). Table 1 below presents a summary of the total number of participants for each research tool used during the project. The research participants also included farmers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection Tools</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Semi-structured Interviews (women)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-structured Interviews (men)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-structured Interviews (key informants)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Discussions (women)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Discussions (men)</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Group Discussion</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trend Analysis (men and women total)</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Cards (men and women total)</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Interviews</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Number of Participants</strong></td>
<td><strong>316</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
who had either dropped out or had never participated in the AMI project. In this way, data was collected from a wide set of experiences and perspectives. This enabled the research team to achieve a greater deal of triangulation across the data collected, thus enhancing the validity of the findings.

Resource cards, also known as resources picture cards, can be utilized to determine participants’ perceived notions of how important resources are used and controlled between men and women within a household. In carrying out this activity with separate groups of men and women farmers, the research team first showed pictures to participants of common resources of value that were locally relevant (e.g. hand hoe, livestock, radio). The team then gave blank cards to participants and asked them to draw any additional resources that were important to them. Participants were asked to place each card depicting a resource underneath one of three large images: one of a woman, one a man, and another of a woman and a man together, based on which image best represented who in the household used a resource. This would be followed by an in-depth discussion regarding why participants placed resources where they did, in terms of what it meant for the gendered allocation of resources. The exercise was then repeated in terms of how the same resources were controlled (in terms of who made key decisions regarding its use, purchase or sale).

The second PRA activity employed was a variant of trend analysis. It was used to determine changes from before, during and after the AMI project in terms of participants’ ability to meet their important household needs. Farmers were first asked to identify their families’ five most important basic needs. The participating farmers in the activity were then asked to discuss amongst each other, and to then rate (by drawing on a large chart), their ability to meet each of these needs before the project’s inception, during the project, and finally, after the project concluded. Lastly, the research team facilitated discussion among the farmers about which, if any, of their basic needs they had been better or less well able to safeguard over time, and why.

Research was conducted in nine different parishes in the following sub-counties of Arua district in the West Nile region: Uleppi, Ogoko, and Rhino Camp (see Annex 2 for map). The AMI project had been implemented in all three of these sub-counties, as well as in several others. The three sub-counties and the village sites within them were chosen in order to ensure a diversity of geographic locations across the Arua district, in terms of their distance from Arua town, the main commercial center in the district, and whether they were located close to or distant from main roads. The selection of these three broad sites also aimed to ensure a diversity of experiences among farmer groups, some of which were considered to have been successful and others not so successful during the AMI project. The age of farmer participants ranged from nineteen to over sixty. The majority of the respondents were married, although a handful was unmarried, and a dozen or so were widows. A fairly even number of men and women participated in the research. Table 2 on the following page provides a summary of the research sites visited.
In order to achieve reliability and validity of the data collected, the same sets of questions for each data collection tool were asked to participants across sites. In addition to indicators that had been devised prior to the start of field research, and which guided the questions the research team asked, new participatory indicators were derived from the project beneficiaries themselves during the course of the research. These were incorporated into the methodology on an ongoing basis, and thus, a good deal of flexibility was allowed for in modifying specific questions. In this way, an iterative process was used.

Two local translators were hired, one male and one female. In order to limit response bias or reactivity effects among research participants as a result of the presence of members of the opposite sex, the male translator only translated the responses of male farmers, while the female translated for women farmers. Both translators were provided with a complete copy of the questionnaire guide for interviews, group discussions and PRA activities (see Annex 3 for complete guide). Each morning prior to the start of field research, translators were briefed on the data collection tools to be used that day, and the types of questions that were to be asked of respondents. The male translator also conducted mobilization efforts for three days during the week prior to the field research, in order to inform farmer group leaders and former AMI site coordinators (also farmers themselves) within the selected parishes in the three sub-counties of the upcoming visit by the research team. In turn, these local leaders and coordinators asked farmers in their communities to arrive at a common meeting place on the day that the research team was to arrive.

Each day, the research team divided into groups of two, with one person designated as the note taker, and the second person as the facilitator responsible for asking the questions and leading the assigned interviews, discussions or activities. Not all participants arrived at the designated site at the same time, and there were also some unexpected delays on several occasions when all participants arrived late. Thus, the research team had to incorporate flexibility
into the schedule, and be responsive to evolving conditions when deciding on which data collection activities to complete at what times during a given day. At the end of each day, both groups came together to review their field notes, and to discuss the themes that emerged from the participants’ responses. The research team would then transform important themes into preliminary key findings for each of the three broad research questions explored in the study. Based on this phase of the analysis, the research team sometimes found it necessary to modify the data collection tools employed, as well as the specific questions to be asked during the remainder of the field research. These findings also formed the basis for the subsequent analysis that involved a more in-depth examination of field notes of participants’ responses, in order to hone in on a more comprehensive set of findings within and across sub-counties.

Limitations of the Research

Various challenges arose during the course of the field research activities in terms of the reactivity effects caused by the research team and translators, as well as those potentially evidenced in participant responses. For one, the male translator was a current Nile Pro staff member, who formerly worked on the AMI project for about a year as an agricultural extension agent, and who had visited all of the participating villages. It is possible that his translations may have been affected by his own personal opinions regarding how the AMI project was implemented and how successful it had been. In addition, given that many farmers had previously worked with the male translator during the AMI project, it is also possible that the farmers might have responded to some questions in a manner they felt would have been appropriate and acceptable to the translator. However, this potential threat to the integrity of the data did not seem to be as prevalent as originally anticipated, given that male farmers seemed to respond to most questions in a forthright and unrestrained manner, even when discussing the shortcomings of the AMI project. Another potential limitation lies with the fact that the translators on occasion did not translate the entirety of participants’ responses, but rather tended to summarize them. On such occasions, the research team prompted the translators to provide more complete translations of the conversations, but it is likely that in some cases, the details were not fully translated.

Furthermore, the very presence of the research team members introduced a host of reactivity effects that may have influenced participants’ respondents. For example, both farmers and former AMI staff members may have been affected by social apprehension or demand effect, which compelled them to give answers to the research team that they thought the latter would want to hear. In the case of farmers, this was a salient threat particularly in terms of questions asked regarding the impact of the project, the types of household dynamics between men and women, and what their interactions had been like with the former AMI staff that worked with them. With regards to former staff who worked on the AMI project, they likely felt compelled to present the project in positive terms, given that their accounts would in part be a reflection of their own performance. This bias was particularly true in the responses of partner organization staff.
Along the same lines, participants might also have responded in a manner that they thought would benefit them the most in terms of future CARE projects. In order to mitigate this potential response bias among farmers, the team began each day by explaining that the purpose of the fieldwork research was to gain an understanding of the impact that the AMI project had on their lives. The team members explained that they were university students from the United States who were not employees of CARE, but rather, that they would share the information gained from the study with CARE. The team hoped that this explanation would make respondents feel comfortable enough to answer as honestly as possible. A last set of potential limitations in the study deal with the fact that the research methodology relied heavily on farmers’ perceptions of impact, which required them to recall many circumstances both before and during the AMI project. However, this might have been difficult for them to do so accurately. Given that the AMI project ended towards the end of 2007, many farmers may have forgotten during what years certain events happened, or the ways in which they had benefitted from project activities dating back to 2004. Thus, recall error was a factor that compromised the validity of data collected.
A. AMI’s Impact on Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality

i. Agency

Self-esteem

An important aspect of agency examined in this study pertains to women farmers’ self-image, self-esteem and feelings of self-efficacy. This element is also concerned with men’s perceptions and support of women’s capabilities as farmers. Many of the female respondents indicated that their capacity to farm has improved as a result of their participation in AMI project activities. Women’s sense of self-efficacy and self-image as farmers has thus been strengthened as a result of the project. Specifically, this outcome is likely due to women’s membership in the farmer groups, as well as to the training that they received in agronomic best practices. This training included methods on how to open the land, mix sand with sesame seeds and broadcast them, row plant, and enhance soil nutrient levels. Further, men’s perceptions of women’s abilities as farmers have improved as a result of the sesame production activities that women have performed within the farmer groups during the AMI project. Specifically, many of the male respondents commented that they greatly valued women’s agricultural skills in sesame farming, due to women’s improved capacity to obtain higher yields as a result of their participation in the project. Some male farmers in turn expressed that they appreciated women’s participation in the farmer groups because it had generated higher household income. These findings were also corroborated by some AMI project staff. It is thus apparent that men’s appreciation of women’s abilities as farmers has improved particularly as a result of women’s ability to earn increased income from their productive work in sesame cultivation.

Decision making Influence in the Household

A second sub-dimension of agency, and the key one addressed in this study, relates to women’s influence in household decision making processes. This component specifically refers to “the kinds of decisions that women can make over resources such as agricultural implements, livestock, water, land, money, labor, time, knowledge, and kinds of negotiation processes women engage in with men and others holding power (recognizes class, caste, etc.)” (CARE, 2006a, pp. 7-8). The overwhelming majority of the female respondents indicated that they have been able to
wield further influence in the area of household decision making and control, by virtue of their participation in the AMI project. Specifically, while many female and some male farmers stated that some degree of joint decision making between husband and wife about household matters had already occurred prior to the start of the AMI project, the participation of one or all household members in the project has reinforced or strengthened these practices.

Further, many farmers added that this improvement represented a shift in men’s attitudes towards seeing consultation with their wives as beneficial and important for the family as a whole. Several respondents connected this behavioral change to the training received. For example, one female and two male leaders from different farmer groups noted that prior to AMI, there had been many more conflicts between husbands and wives within their community. They stated that because of the knowledge gained about household consultation from the project’s training sessions, currently when there is a disagreement between a husband and wife about how to spend the income derived from sesame, both must explain why an item is necessary for the household, and then arrive at a mutual decision about which need is a priority. Thus, for many households there has been greater harmony and cooperation amongst husbands and wives since their participation in the AMI project. Despite this, the female group leader previously mentioned, as well as the other female group members reported that they still desired a greater degree of decision making power over household resources vis-à-vis their husbands.

The use of the PRA resource cards activity provided further nuance to these findings. The results of these activities are presented in Table 3, on the following page. This table is the same format that was used in AMI project’s Gender Analysis report (2005) to present findings from the resource cards activities that were also utilized in that assessment. A comparison of the findings from the resource cards activities conducted in this study with those undertaken in the gender analysis reveals that their results are identical. However, the discussions that the research team conducted with female and male participants during the resource cards activities shed light on some minor changes that farmers reported had occurred in household decision making in terms of access to and control over resources.

It was discovered through this activity that while women enjoy access to many household resources, there are still several resources that largely remain under the domain of men. These include medium and large assets such as radios, chairs, beds, bicycles and cows. Substantial inequality continues to persist between husbands and wives in terms of decision making power and control over these assets. Specifically, female farmers indicated that all household items are generally acquired through joint decision making between husbands and wives, except in the case of cooking utensils, for which the wife is responsible. However, with regards to the sale of assets, men may sell such high value items as goats, cows, bicycles and even the house without
consulting their wives. Conversely, women merely have sole decision making power only over the sale of cooking utensils such as pots and pans. This distinction between the purchase and sale of household assets allowed the research team to further define a few qualitative impact indicators to be used in the study to measure progress in women’s empowerment.

Table 3: Sex-Disaggregated Access to and Control over Household Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Access</th>
<th>Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cow/Bull</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goat/Sheep</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicycle</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machete/Panga</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A hoe</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooking pots</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papaya Tree</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mango Tree</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bed</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairs</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saucepan</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sickle</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrower</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Axe</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sprayer</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spade</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rake</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trowel</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerrycan</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Further, when questioned about their notion of what an ideal situation of household decision making would consist of, all of the female respondents of the resource cards activity said that they would prefer joint decision making power to exist between husband and wife over all important assets, in terms of use, purchase and sale. This included that their husbands should confer with them on such decisions. The women further explained that such an arrangement would be more efficient than for one household member to make decisions on his or her own, and that it would also benefit their children. The resource card activity was instrumental in allowing the participating women to shape and define specific indicators of their own empowerment, which have been used in the study’s analysis of influence in household decision making.

When asked what has changed since the AMI project took place, nearly all of the female respondents throughout the research mentioned that while they have been able to wield slightly more influence in various areas of household decision making and control, some of their husbands have remained rigid in their thinking, impeding greater intra-household equality. However, these same respondents indicated that CARE could support them in achieving their ideal conception of empowerment in the household by conducting training programs involving both the women and their husbands, in which the issue of equality within household decision making between men and women should be addressed in greater depth.

Further, the resource cards activity revealed that women’s access to land had slightly improved as a result of the AMI project. Specifically, the participating women explained that while their households tended to own a sufficient area of land, until recently, some of the women had faced a certain degree of difficulty in securing their husbands’ permission to use a sizeable portion of this land for cultivation. One woman stated that since the AMI project, she has enjoyed greater freedom to gain access to a plot of land, to farm it, and to use the earned income as she sees fit. When questioned why this particular change had taken place, many women explained that as their husbands perceived the greater benefits of women’s participation in the project, they no longer felt the need to exert as much sole control over land. This was due to the fact that they realized women would use the income derived from sesame sale to pay for substantial household expenses such as children’s medical costs or school fees, or to invest in livestock.

The various accounts of positive change in women’s influence at the household level have been tempered by a few cases where female and male respondents noted that they have experienced no change in their household decision making influence as a result of participating in the AMI project. Yet, it is also important to note that both men and women who reported no change often had not received any training pertaining to gender during the AMI project. Further, there was also a substantial number of cases in which farmers in all three sub-counties stated that joint decision making had occurred at fairly equitable levels prior to the project, and thus they did not perceive any major difference had taken place as a result of their participation in AMI. Finally, most of the male farmers interviewed during the study noted that they did not believe
that there had been a change in this area. Rather, many of them reported that joint decision making and consultation had always taken place within their households.

**Group Membership and Activism**

Group membership and activism is an additional key element of agency, and constitutes an important component of the impact that the AMI project has had on women’s empowerment. This aspect of agency involves “the degree to which women are free to join farmer groups…as a result of their own wishes to do so” (Hill & Khan, 2008, p. 8). This sub-dimension of agency also encompasses men’s support of women’s participation in farmer groups. At the outset of the project, the focus had been predominantly on encouraging women’s membership in the newly-created and already existing farmer groups. Later in the project cycle, AMI managers changed membership requirements to household participation (both husbands and wives) when applicable, rather than women’s participation alone. Generally speaking, after the change was instituted, men consequently began to join farmer groups along with their wives.

Despite the fact that many women-only and mixed-sex farmer groups existed prior to the AMI project, both the number of women’s groups, as well as female membership in existing and new farmer groups increased since the project began. Further, the vast majority of male farmer group members interviewed expressed support for women’s membership in the groups. This support has partially been strengthened as a result of men’s participation in the farmer groups, along with that of their wives. There are several explanations for this finding. First, most men said that as the project progressed, they became aware of the various benefits that their wives’ participation in AMI had brought for their households, including in improved agronomic skills, as well as in higher income. In some cases, these perceived benefits were what led men themselves to join farmer groups. Additionally, men’s perception of the legitimacy of their wives’ involvement in a farmer group was enhanced by the increased membership of other men in the farmer groups. For example, one female chairperson pointed out that after men started joining her farmer group mid-way during the AMI project, many of the husbands of female members stopped complaining that their wives spent too much time in the group. Rather, because men had joined the group, husbands modified their opinions and had an enhanced appreciation for the productive work performed by the group. However, a few women also indicated that men sometimes discouraged their wives from joining farmer groups, as they viewed it to be a waste of time, and also because it reduced the time women had available to engage in their household roles.

“The men are appreciative of the women’s group and the work they are doing because it helps the home and for planting for next season.”

-Lilian, elderly, farmer Bandili parish, Rhino Camp sub-county
Further, the number of women in leadership positions within farmer groups (e.g. treasurer, secretary, vice chairperson, chairperson) has increased since the AMI project. However, the majority of female chairpersons and vice chairpersons, the highest leadership positions, are in women’s or predominantly women-member farmer groups. Women were also most often in the position of treasurer or secretary within all farmer groups. The reason stated for this latter trend was the higher trust conferred to women in terms of their ability to safeguard the financial resources of groups. Only a few women were elected to serve as farmer representatives on the parish-level marketing committees. Further, according to various former AMI staff, the women who benefited most from the project were those who were already leaders of some type in local groups or in their community before the project started.

**ii. Relations**

**New Social Forms**

One of the sub-dimensions of the relational component of women’s empowerment that the research team chose to examine in this study pertains to “new social forms”. This aspect has been defined as the “generation of new, more just and equitable kinds of organizing, new or altered and more equitable relationships, new kinds of behaviors that impact positively upon agriculture” (Hill & Khan, p. 10) For one, the study sought to specifically explore whether or not there had been an increased level of responsiveness to and integration of women’s interests and views by men within the farmer groups as a result of the project.

The experiences of the women interviewed across parishes and sub-counties have varied with respect to this indicator. A few women reported that prior to the AMI project, there was much disagreement between men and women within farmer groups, and that women’s opinions were not respected or listened to. In contrast, they and other women explained that participation in the project has led to greater inclusion of their views within the groups. Only a handful of women in a few parishes pointed out that despite their participation in the project, women’s opinions and interests have been largely ignored in their groups. The participation of group members in gender training is a key factor in explaining these divergent outcomes. Those women who expressed an improvement in the responsiveness to their views, indicated that they and their fellow members had received training in such topics as men and women’s roles in farming, and in group dynamics. Conversely, those women who did not perceive a change in the behavior of the men in their groups, had not participated in training of this kind, nor had their male colleagues.

The research also set out to examine whether or not there had been any increased participation of men in sesame farming activities, particularly in terms of assisting women in the

“[Within the farmer groups,] before AMI, there was much disagreement but after the training the ideas of women are listened to.”

-Beatrice, middle-aged, farmer
  Achubu parish,
  Uleppi sub-county
community. There are signs that men’s participation and assistance provided in sesame farming activities has increased as a result of the AMI project. Some men have begun to help women with sesame farming for the first time, while others have increased their involvement. This was evident in the responses of both women and men who received gender-related training during the AMI project within their farmer organizations, as well as those who did not. It is important to note that this outcome has occurred both in terms of labor contributions on farmer group plots, as well as on fields belonging to a household. Further, this result may be partially the result of sesame’s increasing status as a cash crop, which had begun to take place even prior to the AMI project, and men’s recognition of the higher level of income that can be earned from the commercial production of the sesame II variety. In the case of family plots, several male and female respondents specified that the gender-related training which they received had taught them that in order to see greater benefits from their cultivation efforts, field work should be shared equally amongst members of the same household. Additionally, one female leader from a mixed-sex farmer organization reported that her group was specifically told in its training by AMI partner organization staff (either Nile Pro or CREAM) that traditional gender roles around the division of labor for sesame farming should not continue to be adhered to.

Consequently, there has been a reduction in the gendered division of labor as a result of the AMI project. The majority of the respondents, both male and female indicated that women and men now perform all sesame farming activities together. For example, several female respondents specifically noted that while weeding used to be performed by women alone, men in their farmer groups now assist with this practice. Interestingly, female farmers in majority-women farmer groups noted to a greater extent than did women respondents in mixed- or male-majority groups, that there has been a reduction in the conformity to traditional gender roles in farming among men and women group members. Further, it is crucial not to overstate the level of norm change regarding the gendered division of labor that has taken place. The research team often found that while farmers initially reported that agricultural tasks are shared equally among household and farmer group members, upon further probing, it was discovered that this was not always the case. Sometimes certain farming activities within some households and groups were still performed along traditional gendered lines.

B. CARE’s Support of Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality

To assess CARE’s support of gender equality and women’s empowerment in the AMI project, the research team evaluated the project at two levels of analysis: 1) how the AMI project directly supported and empowered women farmer participants; and 2) how CARE built the capacity of its own staff, as well as that of its partner organizations, to be able foster women’s empowerment and gender equality within the project.

Although women’s empowerment was one of the AMI project’s objectives from the outset, the research findings indicate that changes in both male and female farmers’ attitudes, as
well as progress towards more gender equitable norms and women’s empowerment have been somewhat limited. One of the reasons for this minimal amount of change is due to the short timeframe during which the AMI project was operational. Profound changes in behavior and gender norms are processes of social change that occur gradually over a considerable period of time. However, since the AMI project was implemented for only three years, its impact on women’s empowerment and gender equality was incremental. At the same time, the project also missed critical opportunities by not pursuing the promotion of women’s empowerment in a more holistic or structural change manner.

i. **Direct support of Women Farmers**

**Gender Training to Farmers**

One of the strategies that the AMI project undertook to promote women’s empowerment and gender equality within households and farmer groups was to provide training in gender issues to participating farmers. As mentioned in the previous section, these trainings discussed men and women’s roles in agricultural work, and the importance of sharing farming tasks between them. It also consisted of discussions about the process of joint decision making between husbands, wives, and other family members. Lastly, the training on group dynamics stressed the importance of female leadership in farmer groups. This overall training approach was integrated midway through the project, in response to the recommendations made by the AMI Gender Analysis report (2005) regarding how to better foster women’s empowerment at the household and farmer group levels. However, due to the short duration of the project, as well as various other factors, the gender training component did not produce as significant an impact as AMI staff had assumed it might.

One of the possible reasons why the gender-sensitive trainings did not result in more than a moderate impact on women’s empowerment is due to the fact that the trainings overwhelming targeted women farmers as participants. Interviews with former AMI staff at CARE and CREAM indicated that men did not make up an adequate number of the participants of these trainings. Consequently, the lack of male farmers’ attendance in these trainings meant that their level of engagement in a key building block of fostering more gender-equitable behavior and norm change was one of the reasons that the AMI project had produced limited impacts on women’s empowerment. Many women farmers themselves seemed to be aware of the significant effect that gender-specific trainings within group settings could have on changing the attitudes of men. Specifically, when asked what CARE could do to better support women’s empowerment, some female respondents indicated that there was a need for training to be provided to men in their communities. They also said that there should be negative consequences for male farmer group members who persisted in their gender-inequitable attitudes and behaviors.

Furthermore, the gender trainings were not provided consistently to all farmer group members. While some men and women mentioned that they did receive gender training, approximately 38% of farmers interviewed said that they did not. Additionally, the gender training was a component of a broader training workshop provided by CREAM in other topics
such as group dynamics, leadership skills and the importance of saving within households. According to the AMI project and CREAM staff interviewed, within this broader three-day training session, approximately two to four hours were spent on separately discussing gender issues and the importance of joint household decision making. Furthermore, discussions of gender had not been integrated into all topic areas covered during the trainings. The lack of emphasis and time spent on gender may have also contributed to the fact that many farmers could not recall having received any gender sensitization or training.

**Women’s Membership and Leadership Roles in Farmer Groups**

At the outset of the project, the focus had been predominantly on encouraging women’s membership in the newly-created and already existing farmer groups. The underlying assumption in doing so was that not only were women less involved than men in such farmer associations, but that their participation would directly contribute to their empowerment, mainly through their greater access to information and ability to earn higher incomes from their productive agricultural work. The Gender Analysis report (2005) also emphasized that creating women-only groups was a viable strategy for promoting women’s empowerment. Indeed, the farmer groups provided a forum for women to discuss issues and challenges related to farming. They also enabled them to participate in group farming activities that provided additional sources of labor for them to cultivate larger plots of land.

However, it became apparent that women either made up a large proportion of farmer group members or participated in women-only groups, and that this by itself was not leading to sufficient empowerment as originally envisioned in the project design. Therefore, the potential to affect gender norm change through group membership alone was somewhat limited. Halfway through the project cycle, the AMI staff at CARE took steps to incorporate a larger number of men into farmer groups, by changing the requirement of participating in the project from individual to household (husband and wife) membership. Nonetheless, due to inconsistent application of the new policy during the remainder of the project, it was unable to contribute significantly to shifting gendered norms at the household, farmer group or community levels.

The AMI project also tried to incorporate women’s voices and ideas into decision making processes within farmer groups, by encouraging women’s participation in leadership roles. As mentioned earlier, some of the interviewed women farmers reported that the AMI project supported women to take up leadership positions, and provided them with the required skills needed to serve as effective leaders. While this strategy enabled many women to assume leadership roles, it did not go very far in supporting those women who had marginal influence within their own households prior to joining the project. According to one former project staff person, no deliberate efforts or steps had been taken during the implementation of AMI to reach those women who were not already somewhat empowered, to for example, more fully develop their skills and capacity to be leaders. The AMI project’s Gender Analysis report (2005) had also recommended that an explicit gender strategy be established and integrated into the second half of the project that went beyond membership and leadership numbers, and that rather looked at
gender-specific barriers to supporting women’s needs. However, these recommendations were not implemented.

Interviews with former AMI project staff at CARE illuminated that they were aware of many of these shortcomings. However, the project objectives relating to women’s empowerment, particularly the intention at the outset to predominantly target women as the project beneficiaries, were designed at the urging of the donor organization, rather than having been informed by any internal policy at CARE Uganda regarding the place of gender or women’s empowerment in agricultural projects. Additionally, some of the donor strategies regarding women’s empowerment were developed midway through the project. Thus, even less time and resources were available by that point to revise the project design or the monitoring and evaluation system. The AMI project’s approach to gender therefore lacked the depth required to support a more holistic process of women’s empowerment.

**Micro- versus Macro-level Strategies on Women’s Empowerment**

While some effort was made by the CARE staff working on AMI to promote women’s empowerment and gender equality, including attempts to foster women’s ability to use land and resources within the household and farmer groups, the strategy implemented lacked the coherence necessary from the outset of the project to enable systemic change. Furthermore, it did not encompass any broader, macro-level approaches to addressing embedded structural issues underlying gender inequality in Uganda. For example, CARE did not address the deep-rooted customary practice that generally restricts women’s ability to access, control and inherent land, despite the fact that national de jure laws safeguard these property rights for women. Instead, the AMI project solely focused on periodic trainings that addressed some aspects of gender. They were not complemented by any other interventions that attempted to change community-level norms, or that advocated for broader policy or legislative change in other sectors that directly affect the prospects for improving women’s livelihoods and rights. Thus, patriarchal and traditional norms regarding women’s roles were not tackled in an explicit way during the AMI project. As one of the former project staff persons commented quite succinctly, “What we get [positive changes in gender outcomes] is by accident and not by deliberate design”.

**Reflecting on CARE’s Institutional Learning Regarding Women’s Empowerment**

The AMI project documents, as well as CARE’s recent learning agendas relating to women’s empowerment and gender equality—specifically, the SII Phase 2 (CARE, 2006c) and the Place to Grow (Hill, 2008) multi-project reviews—have highlighted recurring areas of missed opportunities in earlier projects implemented across CARE country offices. Namely, the approaches taken to foster women’s empowerment and the ability of projects to be flexible and responsive to ongoing change have been characterized as “good”, not “great” (CARE, 2006c, p. v). For example, both the SII Phase 2 and the Place to Grow reports discuss that, out of the three dimensions of women’s empowerment—agency, relations and structure—most women who participate in CARE projects “value the structural and relational aspect of their empowerment
more” (CARE, 2006c, p. 9) than agency. However, CARE’s projects have evidenced a tendency to overwhelmingly focus on the agency dimension (CARE, 2006c).

The research team found a similar pattern in the AMI project. Most importantly, its objectives were focused to a greater extent on strengthening women’s agency, rather than on addressing any issues in the structural or relational dimensions of empowerment. Additionally, the SII Phase 2 report had also highlighted the importance of men’s inclusion in the empowerment process. This is another component that was not fully incorporated into the design of the AMI project until mid-way through the project. Even then, men’s participation could have been stronger in terms of the degree to which they were mobilized to encourage women’s empowerment.

ii. Support of Institutional System

Building Institutional Capacity on Women’s Empowerment

Discussions with the CARE and partner organization staff reflect that staff members had a fairly consistent and positive understanding of women’s empowerment in the AMI context, although it was somewhat limited to the dimension of women’s agency. Furthermore, the staff of the two partner organizations explained that CARE had talked to them during informal discussions about the importance of gender and women’s empowerment, and had provided them with general topics that should be discussed during gender trainings with farmer groups. However, there was a lack of consistency in the direct guidance that CARE provided to the partner organizations on the role of gender in the project, as well as the criterion for measuring success in terms of fostering gender equality. For example, both CREAM and Nile Pro staff members indicated that they were not provided with any materials or manuals to follow in terms of implementing their extension services in a gender-sensitive manner. CREAM staff mentioned that they used their own organizational materials, and supplemented this with personal experience on women’s empowerment when delivering the gender component of the training to farmer groups. They further stated that the CARE staff had not explicitly reviewed any of their training materials on gender. Additionally, there was a lack of follow-up on the part of CARE, either immediately after the trainings or later in the project cycle to assess farmers’ retention of concepts discussed, or to evaluate the intermediate outcomes as reflected in behavior changes.

In terms of the support for gender-equitable norms and women’s empowerment within CARE’s internal staffing, at start of the AMI project, two

“There was no support [for gender] and people didn’t understand the whole project. They only knew pieces of it so they didn’t have knowledge [about what the project was trying to achieve]. . . Resources are there [for integrating gender] but they are not necessarily directed at gender.”

Former AMI Staff Member
women were employed in the positions of project manager and production officer. However, both female staff members left within six months, and for the next year and a half, all three staff members were male. During the last year of the project, two additional female staff members were hired, and one of them later became the acting project manager (CARE, 2007b). While efforts were taken to ensure gender diversity among the AMI project staff, the high turnover rate also suggests that perhaps the organizational support provided to female staff persons was not as strong as it might have been.

With regards to the two partner organizations, Nile Pro and CREAM, the majority of the extension agents and trainers that worked on the AMI project were male. At Nile Pro, all of the female extension agents were interns and not full-time paid staff persons. It is also interesting to note that although Nile Pro has continued to work with some of the communities after the project ended, they no longer employ any female agents, either interns or as full-time paid staff. Additionally, all but one AMI site coordinator (farmers who were selected to assist CARE and Nile Pro staff in mobilizing farmer group members for training sessions) across all of the sub-counties where the project was implemented, were men. Furthermore, several site coordinators indicated that they had not received any gender training. Hence, the support demonstrated by Nile Pro in particular, to implement gender-equitable norms internally was quite limited and short-lived.

C. AMI’s Impact on Farmer Group Capacity and Livelihoods

i. Overview of Project Sustainability

One of the original project objectives had been to develop the capacity of the private-sector agricultural extension agency, Nile Pro, to manage market linkages between farmers and a large buyer. However, this had not been accomplished to an adequate degree more than halfway into the project’s term. In order to address this shortcoming, during the second year of the project the AMI staff created a new design—articulated in the AMI mid-term review (CARE, 2006b)—that called for renewed efforts for CARE to ensure that Nile Pro would be able to act as the key “gateway” or intermediary organization in the sesame value chain. Doing so was seen to be critical to enhancing the long-term sustainability of the AMI project’s service delivery model.

This new design entailed limiting the role CARE had been playing, in concert with Nile Pro, as the intermediary between farmer groups and the private-sector buyer, UNO. For example, the responsibility for procuring sesame seeds would be shifted to Nile Pro, who would act on behalf of UNO. In this way, UNO, rather than CARE, was to have begun assuming the risk involved in the purchase of seed supply (CARE, 2006b). Similarly, Nile Pro would solely take over the distribution and seed loan recovery work. In addition, although Nile Pro had been overseeing the sesame bulking process during the AMI project, and was supposed to have organized the sale of sesame in parish-level collection centers, the interview with a former AMI staff person revealed that CARE had actually continued to act as the intermediary buyer on behalf of UNO during the project period from 2004-2007. Thus, the new model also stipulated
that Nile Pro would pre-purchase the sesame harvest from farmers, and then sell to UNO on a commission basis. In this way, additional areas of financial responsibility would have gradually shifted from CARE to Nile Pro.

Although the mid-term review had stated that the new model would be implemented immediately in the second half of the AMI project’s slated three years, interviews with some former AMI staff revealed that it was later decided that the revised approach would begin in a proposed new three-year long second phase, to begin in 2008. However, the research team learned that the AMI project unexpectedly terminated at the end of 2007. This finding came as a surprise, as it had not been reported in project documents. In fact, the AMI final report (2007a) only discussed project activities and outcomes until the end of 2006, which was one year before the project actually ended. The research team learned from the interviews that the project terminated as a result of a number of factors relating to differing views about the new direction of the project. CARE Canada, who had been funding the AMI project, chose to cease its financial support for the proposed second phase. The project thus ended after three years, before sufficient steps had been taken by CARE and partner organization staff to strengthen mechanisms for ensuring post-project sustainability.

Since the completion of the project at the end of the calendar year in 2007, Nile Pro has attempted to continue working with some farmer groups, in collaboration with the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) in Rhino Camp, Wadelai and several other sub-counties in the Arua and Nebbi districts of the West Nile where the AMI project had been implemented. Nile Pro continues to procure the sesame II seeds from the supplier, but is not working with most of the farmer group respondents in the three sub-counties sites that participated in this study. Thus, almost all of the farmer groups interviewed here have been unable to obtain sesame II seeds in the past year and a half since the AMI project ended.

### ii. Farmer Group Capacity

**Adoption of New Agronomic Skills**

All of the farmers interviewed who participated in the AMI project reported having received agronomic training by either CARE or Nile Pro staff. The vast majority of them were able to recall the specific types of training provided to them in recommended agricultural techniques for enhancing the productivity of sesame. As mentioned earlier, these skills and techniques included: opening the land early; working more efficiently by collectively performing certain agricultural tasks; planting sesame separately from other crops; planting sesame seeds in rows; and mixing sand and sesame seeds and then broadcasting them in order to sow. This latter form of mixed broadcasting had been proposed to farmers as an alternative, higher-yielding method to the regular broadcasting technique, and as less time-intensive, but not as high-yielding as row planting.

While most men and women farmers reported that they adopted row planting for sesame cultivation during the AMI project, the vast number of them, regardless of their sex, now use the
broadcasting technique with a mixture of sesame and sand. The preference for broadcasting is due to a number of factors: i) row planting is more time- and labor-intensive both during the planting process and the subsequent thinning that must be done as the crop grows; ii) broadcasting avoids potential problems with seeds being heavily concentrated if row planting is not performed skillfully and iii) broadcasting requires less seeds to cultivate the land. The latter factor is particularly salient, because since the AMI project ended, farmers have been unable to access equivalent quantities of seeds as they had during the project.

With regards to the other agricultural techniques taught during the training, there seems to have been a high level of sustained adoption by both men and women farmers, which has continued to the present. Both male and female farmers in all three sub-counties expressed that the agronomic trainings were very helpful in terms of the enhanced skills they gained to more efficiently grow sesame. This belief was particularly shared among many women farmers. Another interesting outcome is that some farmers in the Rhino Camp and Uleppi sub-counties in particular, who had not participated in the AMI project, have adopted row planting and mixed broadcasting practices from participant farmers in their villages. Thus, another positive outcome of the project is that some degree of farmer-to-farmer learning has taken place informally in the communities visited.

**Sesame Farming Productivity**

The sesame yields that farmers in all three sub-counties realized during the AMI project were almost universally reported to be higher than yields prior to the project. As indicated in Table 4 below, sesame yields across all three sub-counties increased on average by about 57 percent (150 kg/acre to 235 kg/acre) from before the AMI project to during it. These yield figures correspond fairly well to those documented in the AMI mid-term review (CARE, 2006b), which found that yields increased from around 50-100 kg/acre to over 200 kg/acre during the project.

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However, it is important to note that the yield data obtained in this study differ a good deal from those indicated in the AMI final report (2007a), which contained information on the period up until the end of 2006. This document cites that the majority of farmers increased their yields from around 223 kg/acre before the project to 304 kg/acre during the project, both of which are much higher than the yield data obtained by the research team. It is unclear what the
reasons for this discrepancy are, but they might relate to farmers’ inaccurate recall during this study of their yields from earlier years. Conversely, the yields indicated in the final project may represent an inaccurate approximation, given that those obtained from the present study and the mid-term review are fairly similar. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that during the field research, many women were unable to report their yields per area of land. This might have been due either to their inability to recall the approximate quantities. Or it might indicate that their husbands or male farmer group colleagues played more prominent roles in the bulking of sesame, and in recording quantity produced.

However, regardless of the precise yield figures, the enhanced sesame productivity during the AMI project can be attributed to several factors. For one, the sesame II variety of seeds that CARE provided to farmers on a loan basis is a higher-yielding genotype as compared to the local Sesame I variety traditionally grown in the West Nile region. In addition, the sesame II variety is somewhat drought-resistant. This advantage of the seed type benefitted farmers in some parishes of Uleppi by mitigating the negative effects of drought on their harvest in one or two seasons during the AMI project. However, many farmer groups in Uleppi, some in Rhino Camp and a few in Ogoko sub-counties still reported that their sesame harvest failed in farming seasons during 2006 and/or 2007 because of the severity of the droughts during those years. The effects of the drought were so detrimental to farmers that many of them had difficulty in repaying their seed loans to CARE.

Furthermore, during 2007, the final year of the AMI project, farmers were erroneously provided with a mixture of Sesame I and sesame II seeds, instead of pure sesame II seeds. The AMI final report (2007a, p. 9) also refers briefly to this “technical error” as a factor that affected productivity. The mistake was made by the supplier from which CARE had procured sesame seeds that season. Just about all of the farmer groups reported that they experienced much lower sesame yields that season, and that in turn, they suffered from reduced sales. To attempt to compensate for this loss, CARE and Nile Pro collected the seed loan repayment from farmers that year at a ratio of 1 kilo to 1 kilo (instead of the usual 1 to 2, or 1 to 3). However, the error and its negative impact on sesame productivity disheartened the farmers to a significant degree, and in some cases, eroded farmers’ trust in CARE. Furthermore, in a few instances, the incidence also compelled some farmers to drop out of their groups, and other farmer groups to disband.

Given that the AMI project came to an unexpected end after three years, and mechanisms were not in place to enable all of the participating farmer groups to continue to access sesame II seeds, most respondents have reverted back to growing the lower-yielding Sesame I local variety. Only a small minority of farmers are still in possession of sesame II seeds that they have saved from previous farming cycles, but even these seeds will degenerate within one or two more generations. Thus, for the most part, sesame farming productivity has declined significantly since the end of the AMI project.

Amount of Land Cultivated

Despite the fact that the AMI mid-term review (CARE, 2006b) recommended that a stronger monitoring system be maintained to track key output indicators such as area of land
plots farmed, the research team was only able to obtain this data on an aggregate level across all project participants, and not at household- or intra-household levels. Based on data reported in the AMI final report (2007a) on the total number of acres of land cultivated for sesame, and the total number of participant households noted to be involved by the end of 2006, it can be estimated that each household farmed an average of approximately 1.9 acres of land that year. According to the final report, this amount had increased from an average of .45 acres per household at the start of the project in 2004 (CARE, 2007a).

The qualitative data obtained from the present study corroborated the general finding that the area of land cultivated by farmers had increased. When asked if the size of their land plots farmed for sesame had changed during the AMI project, all male and female respondents questioned in the three sub-counties said that they had been able to farm a larger area of land. This was partly due to the fact that they were able to obtain a substantially larger quantity of sesame seeds during the AMI project than before their membership. Secondly, the AMI project had either encouraged for the first time or strengthened the extent to which members in a farmer group engaged in collective farming, which had not been done traditionally by most farmers in these communities prior to the AMI project. By engaging in collective farming, group members contributed labor and other inputs to help fellow farmers cultivate both the group’s shared land, as well as their individual plots. This enabled all farmers to cultivate a larger acreage of land. Women farmers in particular stated that these outcomes were true for them.

However, it is also important to note that many female and male farmer respondents owned areas of land that still went uncultivated during the AMI project because of a lack of sufficient labor and inputs, such as time- and labor-saving farming equipment. Farmers reported that they have continued to utilize mainly the hand hoe in preparing the fields, which constrains the amount of land that they can cultivate. The final AMI report (2007a) also reached a similar conclusion. Interestingly, mid-way through the project, CARE had provided free oxen and ploughs to select farmers as a means of enabling them to increase productivity and the size of land cultivated for sesame production. The interview with a former AMI staff person revealed that the intention had been to provide women with the oxen and ploughs, in order to support women’s ability to benefit from time- and labor-saving technologies. However, in the actual implementation phase, the animals and farming tools were awarded to those farmers who had more consistently adopted the various agronomic practices promoted during the project. It is unclear what percentage of these farmers were women. Furthermore, the oxen had been brought in to Arua and Nebbi districts from a region of Uganda that differed greatly in terms of climatic conditions. Thus, the livestock were unsuited to the environment in the West Nile; this, coupled with the fact that some became sick with disease, led to the death of all the oxen within a year or two.

**Women’s Empowerment and Agricultural Productivity**

There is a positive relationship between higher sesame yields (barring the occurrence of drought), size of land cultivated, and greater empowerment of women farmers. In addition to the high-yielding sesame II seeds provided and the more efficient planting techniques taught to
farmers in sesame cultivation, as discussed previously, the agronomic and gender training to some extent encouraged many male and female farmers in groups, and many husbands and wives to work collectively on sesame plots. These various factors enabled farmers to achieve higher sesame productivity. In addition, the trainings and group membership can in general be seen to have strengthened women’s agency, as well as contributed to increased productivity.

In fact, the empowerment of women farmers and the positive impact on changing gender norms to some extent contributed to enhancing the productivity of sesame production. This outcome occurred as households and groups more efficiently allocated labor and other inputs (seeds, farm tools) across sesame land plots farmed by both women and men. A causal relationship between women’s empowerment and agricultural productivity cannot be deduced in the absence of comparison groups with other farmers, or comprehensive baseline data. However, there was to some extent a positive association between women’s empowerment at the household and group levels— in terms of agency, decision making, more gender-equitable relations— and agricultural productivity.

**Capability to Market Collectively**

Both female and male farmers often reported not having received training in collective marketing or record keeping during the AMI project. This finding might have been due to the inability of respondents to recall having received this training. If true, this outcome could be indicative of the fact that the training was inconsistently provided to all farmer groups, or that farmer attendance was not required. Staff interviews revealed that there was not necessarily a system in place to ensure that all farmer group members attended trainings. Further, the marketing trainings were likely provided mainly to marketing committee members and farmer group leaders. This was despite the fact that the marketing training was to have been provided by staff from the AMI partner organization CREAM initially to farmer group chairpersons, followed by other group leaders, and lastly, to all farmer group members (CARE, 2006b). Interestingly, both male and female farmer group chairpersons and vice-chairpersons reported to a much greater extent having received marketing training during the AMI project, and that their group members also received this training. However, the latter was not borne out consistently in the responses of regular farmer group members. Alternatively, the low levels of adoption of marketing skills among farmers might also be due to a poor quality of training imparted in this topic.

For those farmers who said they had received this type of training, they have utilized record keeping skills both during and after the AMI project from a low to moderate level. This finding corroborates the mid-term report’s (CARE, 2006b) conclusion that farmer groups’ record keeping efforts were inadequate and needed to be strengthened to better ensure the capacity and financial sustainability of the groups’ collective marketing efforts. It is unclear whether this recommendation was followed up on in a systematic manner during the remainder of the project. There are also considerable shortcomings in the extent to which farmers and elected parish-level marketing committee members have been able to apply skills gained in marketing to the sale of sesame. Most farmers and marketing committee members lacked the ability to obtain necessary
and relevant information about sesame prices and buyers’ preferences and specifications. This represents a significant weakness in the project’s ability to meet the objective of building the capacity of farmer groups; as discussed previously, knowledge of marketing skills is critical to any successful efforts to enhance smallholder farmers’ prospects of improving market linkages. It also contradicts the account of a former CREAM trainer who claimed to have provided marketing committee members with skills and knowledge necessary for them to be able to access this type of information through local government channels. The latter activity was also an intended component of the project’s objective on building effective market linkages (CARE, 2007a). According to the former capacity-building agent interviewed, AMI and Nile Pro staff were to have followed up regularly with the farmer marketing committees to assess their ongoing capacity to engage in their delegated responsibilities of managing the collective bulking and marketing processes. However, it is unclear to what extent such monitoring efforts occurred with the marketing committees, or what progress had been made on farmer groups creating linkages with local government bodies. The project documents did not discuss either of these issues.

**Market Linkages between Farmers and Chain Buyers**

The bulk marketing process involving the sale of sesame by farmer groups to the buyer UNO, via Nile Pro and CARE was fairly weak in all three sub-counties, and encountered numerous challenges during the course of the project. This came as a significant surprise to the research team, as the project documents had reflected a higher level of success in the extent to which collective marketing of sesame had taken place during the AMI project. As Table 5 below shows, the vast majority of men and women farmers questioned reported that they sold their sesame harvest to local buyers and middlemen rather than collectively to UNO during all three years of the project. Conversely, very few farmer sold collectively in their farmer groups to UNO either once (approximately 35 percent of male farmers and 9 percent of female farmers) or twice (9 percent of male farmers and 17 percent of female farmers) out of the three years of the project. Interestingly, there is a very large difference between the percentage of men and women who reported to have sold collectively to UNO during one year only.

**Table 5. Participation of Women and Farmers In Collective and Individual Sale of Sesame (in Rhino Camp, Uleppi and Ogoko sub-counties)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sold collectively to UNO once only</th>
<th>Sold collectively to UNO at least twice</th>
<th>Only sold individually in local markets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Women</strong></td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Men</strong></td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The research uncovered numerous obstacles and challenges that undermined collective marketing efforts, some of which have also been documented in the AMI mid-term review and the final report. There were a host of factors that deterred some farmers from bulking their sesame in storage facilities and selling collectively to UNO, as discussed below:

1. **Low prices, lack of bargaining power**

   The most common reason cited by farmers for not having sold to the buyer, was that the prices UNO was willing to pay were lower than what farmers thought was a fair market price. Most of the farmer groups that did engage in collective marketing sold their sesame to UNO in either the first or second marketing cycles during the project, even though they believed that the price at which they sold for was too low. Several farmers explained that they had been told by CARE that participating in the AMI project would enable them to earn a higher, fair price by selling to a large buyer. Thus, these farmers believed that perhaps the price of sesame would increase during subsequent years. While the prices at which UNO bought sesame increased in later marketing cycles during the project, reflecting a rise in the world price of sesame, many farmers still thought that these were too low when inflation was taken into account.

   When parish-level marketing committees on the one hand, and CARE and Nile Pro on behalf of UNO on the other could not reach an agreement on the sale price of sesame per kilo, entire farmer groups were then not able to sell collectively. Instead, they were compelled to find buyers in local markets or middlemen who would purchase larger quantities. Sometimes individual farmers might also have decided to pull their seeds out of the bulked quantity to be sold to UNO if they were not satisfied with the agreed-upon price, and to similarly sell locally. Therefore, some farmers and farmer groups who sold collectively during the start of the project may have decided in the following years to sell locally if they believed that doing so would earn more income.

   Even though one of the principal objectives of the project was to increase farmer groups’ negotiating power vis-à-vis buyers in the marketing value chain, and— according to the former AMI project manager— for UNO to guarantee a market for farmers, neither was successfully accomplished. With regards to the former objective, several male farmers and key informant farmer group leaders expressed that their groups and marketing committees possessed a low degree of bargaining power to negotiate sesame prices with UNO. The farmers attributed this to the fact that the project had not facilitated linkages with other large private buyers, which they believed would have fostered competition and encouraged fairer prices. Thus in this context too, as discussed earlier, the structural challenge of how to effectively enhance the bargaining power of smallholder famers, even those that have collectively organized to create linkages with large market buyers, remains pervasive.

   However, from the perspective of several CARE and partner organization staff, the prices at which farmers were able to sell sesame to UNO throughout the project were higher than the prevailing market prices in the West Nile. This would seem to indicate, then, that farmers were not able to obtain accurate information about prevailing market prices or the levels of transaction costs incurred by UNO, thus contributing to their inflated expectations of sesame
prices. Furthermore, some farmers said that CARE had led them to believe that they would be able earn around 2000 Ugandan Shillings per kilo of sesame. Farmers might have been confused by the fact that CARE had purchased the original seeds from the supplier companies at around this price, and not have understood why the value of the original seed was higher than the sesame produced. Thus, it seems that AMI and/or partner organization field agents did not effectively communicate to all farmer groups realistic expectations about the market prices of sesame II.

2. **Time delay involved in collective marketing**
   
   Another category of factors that explain why some farmers in all three sub-counties did not participate in the collective marketing process, was the length of time involved before farmers received cash payment. The various stages involved in the collective marketing process (bulking in the parish storage facility, the arrival of CARE/Nile Pro on behalf of UNO, the process of negotiating prices between marketing committee and CARE/Nile Pro, and actual purchase if agreement was reached) lasted one month or longer. Because farmers often had pressing household expenditure needs during the start of the sesame marketing seasons, many were unable to wait the extra time needed to sell to and receive cash payment from UNO. The mid-term and final project report both cited similar challenges that hampered the collective marketing process.

3. **Storage facility constraints**
   
   Other times, farmers stated that the main impediment to collective marketing was the absence of a storage facility within the parish. Despite the fact that UNO was supposed to have paid the rental fees for such centers in each parish, and Nile Pro was to have worked with parish-level marketing committees to ensure the implementation of this part of the marketing component, adequate storage facilities had not been established. Without well-guarded and maintained storage centers, as both the mid-term review and the final report also noted, some farmers feared for the security of their harvested sesame, or simply had no space large enough where they could bulk their sesame in anticipation for the time of sale.

4. **Weaknesses in communication and accountability**
   
   In many cases when farmers, especially women, reported that no collective marketing to a large buyer took place during the AMI project, they claimed that a buyer that was to have been sent by CARE, never arrived at the parish storage center. A number of reasons may explain this. For one, the marketing committees of their farmer groups may have negotiated prices with CARE and Nile Pro on behalf of the buyer, and if agreement was not reached and the sale did not go through, marketing committee members and/or farmer group leaders may not have communicated effectively with at-large farmer members about what had happened. Various farmer respondents also indicated that they were not aware that their groups were represented by parish-level marketing committees, and others said that they did not have one. If it is true that some farmer groups had not elected marketing committees, then this is a significant indication of poor project implementation, communication and monitoring efforts on the part of CARE and
partner organization staff. Even if the farmers were simply not aware of the fact that their groups had elected marketing committees, then there must have been significant communication gaps among group leaders and farmers, as well as between AMI project staff and farmers about what steps were involved in the bulk marketing process.

Farmers’ lack of knowledge either that they were supposed to have elected parish-level marketing committees that were to have performed a range of duties, or about what their marketing committees had actually done during various marketing cycles, indicate that some farmer group members did not have sufficient knowledge of or capacity to effectively participate in the commercialization process. It may also be true in some cases that the marketing committees failed in their responsibility to inform CARE that sesame had been bulked and was ready for sale, or to inform all relevant farmer group members within a parish to bring their seeds to a collection center for bulking. Another reason why the sale of sesame to UNO might not have take place even when farmers did bulk in a storage facility, is that a minimum tonnage (either 3 tons or 7 tons, depending on the size of the delivery truck) of sesame was required at a collection center in order for UNO to agree to purchase the sesame. It seems that farmers, and in some cases even group leaders and marketing committees, were not aware of this requirement.

In any of these instances, the lack of effective governance and transparency within the farmer organizations, and the inability of average farmers to hold their leaders accountable, represented serious obstacles to farmers’ engagement in the marketing process. In turn, these challenges in communication and accountability mechanisms undermined the sustainability of the farmer groups, as well as the process of smallholder commercialization. These findings are also similar to the complex challenges relating to effective leadership and governance with which farmer organizations in other parts of Africa and the developing world have been beset for many years. They also highlight that in the AMI project, sufficient attention was not dedicated to ensuring that farmer group members were empowered to recognize that they should hold their leaders accountable, as well as engage fully in the various aspects of collectivization.

In general, the collective marketing process during the AMI project was plagued by many coordination and communication challenges. According to a former AMI staff person, Nile Pro was not effective in facilitating the marketing aspect of the project, as it had been in the provision of extension services. This staff member expressed that in order for the marketing process to have worked successfully, Nile Pro staff should have been present in the field much more consistently than they had been, in order to better coordinate and manage the bulking and marketing processes.

A noteworthy long-term outcome of the project is that a handful of marketing committees were successful in establishing linkages between their farmer groups and other large chain buyers, who purchased sesame in bulk from them several times during the AMI project. Farmers from these select groups in Rhino Camp and Ogoko sub-counties reported that their groups had sold collectively to one of the two national wholesalers, Export and OLAM. However, the farmers were not fully aware of how their marketing committees had been able to create these market linkages. During the last year of the AMI project and the year following its completion,
some of these farmer groups continued to sell collectively to one of these two companies. Since UNO was apparently unable to compete with the prices paid by these two buyers since 2007, it had a diminishing presence in some areas as a buyer, particularly since the onset of the recent global economic crisis. This has presented a particular challenge to Nile Pro’s most recent efforts to maintain linkages between some farmer groups and UNO since the AMI project ended.

In the past year after the termination of the project, most farmer groups have continued to sell their sesame to middlemen, when drought has not severely reduced their harvest. However, despite the various disappointments and challenges men and women farmers encountered during the AMI project’s marketing activities, the vast majority of them expressed support for engaging in collective marketing in the future, as they understood the numerous benefits they could derive from doing so.

**Access to Agricultural Inputs and Technical Services**

Farmer respondents who were questioned had not benefitted during the AMI project from an increased ability to purchase agricultural inputs other than seeds. They discussed having faced persistent difficulties in being able to buy even basic farm implements such as the hand hoe, due to insufficient income earned. In general, it seems that without savings and loans mechanisms, farmer group members did not have the ability to purchase additional agricultural inputs that could have contributed to enhancing productivity. This inability has been further exacerbated since the end of the AMI project, given that farmers are now also unable to obtain sesame II seeds.

Since the end of the AMI project, most farmer respondents still belonged to a farmer group, while a small minority reported to have dropped out of a group or that their group was no longer functioning. Quite a few groups have continued to receive no-fee extension services and seeds for other crops from development agencies such as NAADS and GTZ. Several other groups continue to work with Nile Pro. However, a substantial number of farmer groups reported that they have not received additional extension services from any other organization since AMI ended. Most regular farmer members at least, are unaware of how to go about seeking such extension services. Many of the groups in this latter category said that they hoped CARE or another development organization would return to implement additional agricultural projects from which they could benefit. Thus, it is clear that most of the farmer organizations are unable to function autonomously to receive extension services or inputs.

**iii. Household Livelihood Security**

The vast majority of male and female farmers reported that their participation in the AMI project and commercial sesame sale had resulted in higher earned income for their households, at least during some points of the project, if not throughout. Many farmers also stated that the increase in income earned from sesame sale was not very substantial. Despite this, most farmers said that higher annual income was one of the main benefits of their participation in the AMI project. But as the AMI mid-term review mentioned (CARE, 2006a), it is not possible to attribute all increases in household-level income between 2004 and 2007 to sesame sale and the
AMI project activities. For one, this is due to the difficulties associated with farmer recall of exact income derived from sesame sale during the years in question. In addition, some farmers have received capacity-building training from other organizations such as NAADS within the past ten years or so, which may have also enabled them to gain skills in more efficient agricultural practices, and in turn, earn higher incomes. Furthermore, the research team was unable to obtain annual, sex-disaggregated data on household-level income that had been collected during the course of the project, which would have been instrumental in quantitatively assessing changes in income over time within male- and female-headed households.

Generally speaking, almost all respondent farmer households reported having used the increased income earned from sesame sale during AMI to purchase small necessary household items and clothing, to pay for school fees and medical care, and to invest in small livestock. Data gathered during the trend analysis activity indicated that based on farmers’ perceptions of vital dimensions of livelihood security such as potable water, access to seeds, health care, agricultural technologies and access to markets, farmers were overall unable to substantially increase their ability to fully meet these needs as a result of their participation in the AMI project. However, farmers noted that during the AMI project, their ability to meet a few of these essential needs (seeds, access to markets) had slightly improved as compared to prior to their participation. Furthermore, most farmers, particularly women, indicated that they bought small chickens and goats as a form of investment and savings, with the additional income they derived as a result of the AMI project. These farmers reported that the AMI project had directly encouraged and enabled them make decisions as a family to purchase these animals. This outcome reflects the fact that, given the absence of being able to access microfinance savings and credit services, households have used the purchase of livestock as a means of savings to better position themselves to mitigate any negative impacts resulting from potential economic shocks or family crises. However, since the end of the project, farmers once again reported that they have faced persistent difficulties in providing for their basic livelihood needs.

"Before [the AMI project] I spent money in any way, and I didn’t think about how to spend it. But now because of the training I keep some around for things…I realized after the training that it’s best to invest in a goat to help keep a steady money supply."

—Grace, age in 40s, widowed farmer
Gbuluoatani parish
Rhino Camp Sub-county
Part VI: Recommendations

It has been a unique opportunity to learn about the perceptions of male and female smallholder farmers in the West Nile region of Uganda regarding their experiences with the AMI project, both in terms of sesame farming and marketing capacity, as well as women’s empowerment. The insights unearthed through discussions with farmers, as well as with CARE Uganda and partner organization staff, highlight various lessons that can enable CARE to take a more multi-faceted approach to promote: i) women’s empowerment and gender equality; ii) farmer group capacity within value chain interventions; and iii) farmer livelihood security. The research team believes that the following recommendations will better position CARE country offices that conduct agricultural value chain programming to enhance the effectiveness of their approaches to gender, as well to strengthen market linkages for smallholder farmers.

A. **Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality**

There has been a great deal of political will among leadership at CARE Headquarters and across country offices for many years to promote women’s empowerment and gender equality in its varied intervention sectors, and in the past few years, within its agriculture and natural resource programming. This drive has been especially evident during the ongoing Place to Grow initiative, and the recent Circle of Learning Workshop on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture, in Entebbe. While such commitment certainly serves as a strong impetus for strategically pursuing women’s empowerment and gender within agriculture, it should also be supplemented by a more thorough set of approaches to ensure that supporting women and gender equality is more integrally and holistically made a centerpiece of agriculture at CARE.

**Catalyzing Women’s Empowerment through Holistic Programming**

1. **Foster the development of holistic approaches to women’s empowerment and gender equality from the project design phase**

It is essential for a holistic gender strategy to be crafted for CARE’s agriculture and natural resource projects, which builds on CARE’s Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture framework. Such a strategy must seek to determine how project activities and mechanisms can address the *relational* and *structural* dimensions of women’s empowerment, in addition to women’s *agency*. Only through a multi-dimensional approach to promoting gender equality that takes into account local gendered power relations, can long-term impacts for women’s empowerment be achieved beyond micro-level, incremental changes, such as those that solely
enhance women’s skills or access to information, or promote women’s decision making influence within the household.

Of critical importance to any agricultural intervention that hopes to produce substantial and long-term impacts on women’s empowerment, is the need to address women’s land ownership rights, which is a lever of change articulated in the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture framework. This is particularly important in many contexts where males are the sole *de jure* or *de facto* property holders. CARE should make inroads to address this complex and overarching issue, at policy and legislation levels, as well as within customary practice, by using a rights-based approach that enables women to engage with duty bearers to foster greater gender equality within macro-level institutions. Indeed, CARE has for several years expressed its commitment to integrating rights-based approaches into its programming. Such a strategy, while complex and fraught with political, social and organizational challenges, can in many instances better enable the realization of women’s empowerment and gender equality at broader community- and societal-levels.

Additionally, embedded within the structural and relational approaches to women’s empowerment is the need to engage with males at various levels to support women’s rights and livelihood strategies within agriculture. CARE project staff should encourage the participation of male community members and potential participants during project design and implementation phases. They can do this by pursuing means of creating open dialogue with men in order to facilitate the process of changing norms regarding gendered roles and inequalities at the household and community levels. Through such a process, influential males can also be encouraged to serve as local advocates of women’s empowerment. Conversely, as countless studies have demonstrated, neglecting to include men within the process of advancing women’s empowerment may not only result in weaker, less meaningful change for women, but may also increase the possibility of community backlash as a result of men’s perceived exclusion from projects and change processes. Finally, a clear understanding is required among CARE managers and staff of the holistic strategy to be pursued for advancing women’s empowerment and gender equality within a project, including the roles that CARE and each partner organization are to carry out to most effectively foster such change processes.

2. **Encourage the formulation of a balanced set of gender sensitive and participatory project objectives, and monitoring and evaluation indicators**

    Female and male project participants must be better integrated “into the design of agricultural projects/programs in terms of their priorities, needs, interests, constraints, as well as their own parameters of ‘empowerment’” (Hill & Khan, 2008, p. 45). Specifically, beneficiaries should participate in defining project objectives, outcomes and indicators in order to ensure that they are appropriate for advancing progress in women’s empowerment and gender equality. In turn, these can form the basis of a project’s M&E system. Such participant-shaped project components should of course be balanced with the particular objectives and institutional interests of CARE and project donors.
Further, the M&E system for a given project should incorporate a balance of quantitative and qualitative indicators. The importance of gender-sensitive qualitative indicators for measuring impact on women’s empowerment cannot be overstated. Quantitative indicators alone are insufficient for pursuing a “wide screen” (CARE, 2006c, p. vi) approach for capturing changes in women’s empowerment within the context of social, political and economic factors that either facilitate or hinder the process. Thus, qualitative impact indicators that measure broader change beyond simply project-specific outputs and outcomes are necessary. For both of these aims, the use of qualitative tools such as interviews, group discussions, and participatory reflection and action activities (PRA) such as resource cards or trend analysis, among a host of other gender-sensitive tools, can be utilized. These tools can also be used to gather baseline data at the project’s outset.

3. **Build the capacity of CARE country office and implementing partner organization staff to pursue women’s empowerment and gender equality**

The implementation of an integrated women’s empowerment strategy requires building the technical capacity of staff and partner organizations in various respects. Gender officers within CARE country offices should be effectively utilized to train the organization’s project managers and other staff on how to conduct gender analyses of prevailing social structures and conditions in a given local context, as well as how to use insights to inform project design (such social and gender assessment is already required at CARE to be conducted prior to the start of any project). The gender experts can also work with project staff to help them devise the gender-sensitive M&E systems.

Other specific strategies to build organizational capacity among CARE as well as partner organization staff include: gender workshops or orientations prior to project implementation phases, peer coaching and shared learning events. Gender workshops and orientations ensure that project staff members possess a coherent understanding of how to approach gender issues when carrying out project activities. Peer coaching and shared learning sessions go one step further in providing CARE and partner organization staff an opportunity to exchange both successes and difficulties encountered in the design and implementation of gender strategies within agricultural projects, and can therefore catalyze improved understanding of the crucial issues and processes of women’s empowerment, as well as how projects can be best positioned to achieve social change.

4. **Encourage balancing CARE’s institutional mission with external donor priorities**

Given that the gender component of the AMI project was in fact heavily donor-driven, this raises important questions about the need to attempt to strike a balance between CARE’s own internal mission regarding women’s empowerment and gender, with those of donors when designing projects and their M&E systems. This can be partially addressed through the use of the aforementioned gender trainings for CARE staff, which would help to strengthen internal
commitment to universally integrate women’s empowerment into project design. Further, when donor agencies’ goals for particular objectives do not explicitly prioritize the concern for women’s empowerment or addressing gender, this does not have to be seen as a red-light for integrating these concerns comprehensively into project design. Rather, it can prompt CARE country offices to promote a two-way exchange with external donors. To the extent possible, CARE managers can take efforts to push for gender objectives to be addressed within its agriculture and value chain programming, as well as make the case that women’s empowerment is a necessary component to enhance the effectiveness of interventions with poor farmers.

**Establishing Incentives and Accountability Mechanisms on Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality**

In addition to the political will and technical capacity to more effectively promote women’s empowerment and gender equality, efforts should be taken to strengthen incentives and accountability mechanisms that can more systematically translate support and capacity into effective implementation. Country directors should create incentives for integrating women’s empowerment and gender equality into all phases of project planning. This can be done by tying promotional opportunities to creative thinking and the utilization of innovative strategies that foster women’s empowerment, such as those that venture to pursue “wide screen” (CARE, 2006c, p. vi) rights-based approaches. While CARE has demonstrated a rhetorical commitment to the pursuit of such macro-level strategies as the rights-based approach, country offices must be encouraged to operationalize it to a much greater extent within their projects.

Along the same lines, accountability mechanisms need to be instituted at the country office level to ensure that not only all projects conduct gender or power analyses, but that they also integrate these insights into project design, as is mandated by CARE. Further, such accountability procedures should also be established to ensure that country gender advisors or focal persons play an integral role in designing gender-sensitive, as well as intermediate- and long-term impact indicators for women’s empowerment within project log-frames.

**B. Farmer Group Capacity, Collective Marketing and Household Livelihood Security**

1. Reduce project participants’ dependency

While some form of short-term dependency by smallholder farmer project participants on CARE is usually unavoidable during the initial phase of an agricultural or value chain project, these projects can end up fostering a long-term dependency syndrome among farmers. Thus, CARE’s agricultural projects should work to ensure that after the initial impetus provided, they have sufficiently taken steps to ensure that farmer organizations and institutions are equipped with capacity in marketing, record keeping and governance skills. This is essential in attempting
to address persistent and structural problems that poor farmers face, and enabling them to implement their own strategies in the intermediate- and long-term to maintain and strengthen market linkages. This can be better achieved through the integration of rights-based approaches within interventions to address the relational and structural dimensions of farmers’ empowerment. CARE can strengthen the capacity of smallholder farmers to engage in advocacy efforts with local government agencies in order to create channels for obtaining extension services and marketing information. This can in turn help farmers to counter the constraints that impede them from benefiting from market linkages.

2. **Provide farmers with effective training in marketing and how to access market information**

   It is paramount for value chain interventions that work with smallholder farmer groups to ensure that both female and male members, in addition to leaders, have a strong understanding of market conditions (such as prevailing market prices, and buyers’ preferences) within the sub-sectors of the crops to be sold. Building in mechanisms to ensure that farmer group members and leaders, as well as marketing committee representatives, are able to access and obtain timely information on commodity prices is also critical to ensure that farmers possess a realistic understanding of what prices they can expect to sell at. Farmers’ ability to retrieve market information through channels established by the project should be assessed on an ongoing basis by project and partner organization staff.

3. **Establish collection centers to ensure easy access by farmers**

   The lack of storage facilities within an accessible distance from farmers’ fields can be a critical factor undermining the collective marketing process. Farmers need to know that they can easily transport their bulked produce to a storage facility until the buyer arrives to purchase. Furthermore, storage facilities have to be guarded, so that farmers are ensured of the security of their crop. Project staff at CARE and the participating intermediary organization should be responsible for facilitating the process of selecting or establishing collection centers, together with local farmer organizations or representatives. The roles of all actors involved should be clearly defined, so as to better ensure that adequate and ongoing management and security services are carried out.

4. **Conduct ongoing assessments of farmer marketing committees and associations**

   This can be done not only through continuous trainings to these groups on the collective marketing process and the roles that marketing committee members are to perform, as was done in the AMI project, but to also conduct ongoing assessments of the capacity of these associations. Such assessments should in particular determine how effectively committee members disseminate pertinent messages to farmer group members concerning critical issues such as market information related to the produced commodity, the status of negotiations with
potential buyers, when farmers should collectively bulk, and when buyers are expected to arrive. Improving the channels of communication between farmer group members and their marketing committees in this way can equip farmers with the knowledge they need to make more informed decisions regarding the sale of their crops. In order to create greater incentives for marketing committee members to effectively perform their responsibilities, it would be wise to ensure that they are remunerated in meaningful some way.

5.  **Conduct ongoing assessments of the intermediary organization**

Similar to the recommendation above, ongoing assessments should be undertaken from the outset of the project to determine the effectiveness of the intermediary organization tasked with facilitating market linkages. This process can help to identify early on any potential shortcomings in its implementation capacity. Doing so can enable CARE to take steps to gradually enhance the post-project viability of market linkages created, so that at the end of the project cycle, the prospect will be greater that farmer groups and the intermediary organization will be able to continue to function as self-sufficient value chain actors.

6.  **Facilitate potential market linkages with multiple buyers**

Smallholder farmer groups stand to benefit the most from the development of value chain marketing linkages when they are able to negotiate collective commodity sales with more than one potential buyer. Partner intermediary organizations can provide farmer marketing committees with sufficient information needed to contact other buyers, as well as potentially facilitate communication channels between the buyers and farmers. Further, commodity prices can be negotiated prior to a buyer’s deployment of trucks to the collection centers to pick up produce. This way, in the event that an agreement on prices is not reached between producers and the buyer, the latter will not needlessly increase its transaction costs, and farmers will not become disappointed with the process if they have already expended energy to collectively bulk ahead of time.

7.  **Integrate middlemen as potential agents within the value chain**

Middlemen and local traders often play a critical intermediary role in the sale of sesame and other commercial crops further along the marketing chain. By not considering how to integrate them into value chain efforts, projects can run the risk of undermining the sustainability of farmer commercialization efforts, given that farmer groups often decide to sell produce to middlemen rather than wait for the private buyer for a host of reasons. Thus, middlemen can potentially be incorporated into the collective marketing partnership, perhaps as agents that work together with an intermediary organization, in order to facilitate the transportation of the commodity closer to the buyer and/or the bulking process.
8. **Assist farmers to meet their immediate liquidity needs**

During certain times in the calendar year, farmers often experience pressing financial concerns, such as the need to provide for immediate food security, unexpected health expenses, or social obligations. To mitigate the effects of such circumstances that may compel farmers to immediately sell their crops locally, rather than to bulk and collectively market, microcredit schemes can be incorporated into projects. Access to such immediate credit can enable farmers to wait longer to receive payment from the buyer; these loans can then be repaid once the buyer has paid cash for the bulked crop. Furthermore, farmers can use microcredit to purchase inputs such as farming tools or to contract additional labor that can ultimately increase their production capacity.

9. **Implement agricultural marketing projects with interventions in other livelihood sectors**

Integrating agricultural projects with other interventions in sectors such as health or water can enhance the impact seen in terms of improving farmers’ livelihood security, well-being and agricultural production capacity. Pursuing a multi-sectoral approach can create multiplier effects that can produce greater results in a given time span, as each serves to meet the interconnected needs of farmers. CARE can also coordinate with other national or international development organizations already working in a given area, to ensure that a broader range of livelihood programming is implemented in target communities.
References


**ANNEX 1: TABLE OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS, INDICATORS & DATA COLLECTION TOOLS**

1. How has the project contributed to the empowerment of women farmers?
   a. In terms of their ability to exercise decision making power at the household (HH) level?
   b. In terms of their ability to control income earned from the commercial sale of sesame?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Questions</th>
<th>Indicators/ Sub-questions</th>
<th>Tools</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Agency</strong></td>
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</table>
| A. Self-image, self-esteem | • Improved women's perceptions of their abilities as farmers  
  • Improved men’s perception of women's abilities as farmers | • Group discussions with women  
  • Group discussions with men  
  • SSI with women |
| B. HH decision making influence and control | • Increased women's decision making over planting different crops  
  • Increased women's decision making power over the use of agricultural inputs  
  • Increased women's decision making power over the sale of agricultural inputs  
  • Increased women's decision making over the marketing of sesame  
  • Increased women's use of medium and large assets (e.g. land, house, cow, goat and radio)  
  • Increased women's decision making power over the use of assets  
  • Increased women's decision making power over the use of household income to save  
  • Increased women's decision making power over the sale of medium and large assets (e.g. house, cow, goat and chicken)  
  • Increased women's decision making power of the use of household income to purchase of medium and large assets (e.g. bicycle, radio) | • Semi-structured interviews (SSI) with women  
  • SSI with men  
  • SSI with AMI staff  
  • Resource cards |
| C. Group membership/ activism | • Increased women's membership in existing farmer groups  
  • Increased support by men of women's membership  
  • Increased women's leadership roles in farmer groups and marketing committees | • SSI with women  
  • SSI with key informants  
  • Group discussions with women  
  • Group discussions with men |
| **Relations** D. New social norms | • Increased responsiveness to and integration of women's interests and participation in farmer groups  
  • Reduced gendered division of labor in sesame farming | • Group discussions with women  
  • Group discussions with men  
  • SSI with key informants |
2. How did CARE’s policies, processes, capacity building efforts, relations with local communities, and norms assist the AMI project to, or constrain it from addressing women’s empowerment and gender equality?

| A. CARE’s direct support for women farmers | • What approaches did CARE employ to build the capacity of AMI staff to address gender equality and women's empowerment?  
• What approaches did CARE employ in the AMI project to incorporate women's voices, perspectives, and needs into farmer group activities?  
• What approaches did CARE employ to support women in their dialogue and negotiation with men about decision making and control over household resources?  
• How did CARE demonstrate flexibility during the project in addressing gender equality and women’s empowerment in terms of implementation strategies? | • SSI with women  
• SSI with men  
• SSI with Nilepro  
• SSI with AMI staff  
• Group discussions women  
• Group discussions with men |
| B. CARE’s support of institutional systems | • What approaches did CARE employ to build the capacity of AMI staff to address gender equality and women's empowerment?  
• What approaches did CARE employ to build the capacity of a. Nilepro and b. CREAM to address women's empowerment and gender equality?  
• What approaches did CARE employ in the AMI project to challenge local gendered power structures that directly affect women’s empowerment? | • SSI with Nilepro  
• SSI with AMI staff  
• Group discussions with women  
• Group discussions with men |
3. What effect has the project had on building the sustained capacity of smallholder farmer groups?
   a. In terms of their ability to engage in the collective marketing of sesame?
   b. In terms of female and male farmers’ ability to provide for the livelihood security of their families?
   c. Has the project produced different impacts on men and women farmers?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. Household livelihood security</th>
<th>B. Farmer group capacity</th>
<th>C. SSI with women</th>
<th>C. SSI with men</th>
<th>C. Trend Analysis</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased earned household income from participation in collective marketing of sesame since start of project (recognizing that many households, and women in particular have multiple sources of income, including non-farm)</td>
<td>Increased technical knowledge of enhanced agricultural production techniques by men and women farmers</td>
<td>SSI with women</td>
<td>SSI with men</td>
<td>Trend Analysis</td>
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<td>Increased ability of households to meet basic need as perceived by farmers</td>
<td>Increased crop yields during AMI and since the end of project</td>
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<td>Increased size of land under cultivation</td>
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<td>Increased knowledge of collective marketing techniques [record keeping, financial management, marketing, storage techniques]</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Strengthened and sustained sesame market linkages between farmers and chain buyers</td>
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<td>Improved farmer understanding of the value and support of collective marketing</td>
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<td>Enhanced ability of farmers to negotiate crop prices with other chain actors (UNO-buyer)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Improved ability of farmer groups to purchase necessary agricultural inputs such as seeds and tools</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Continued farmers’ ability to access technical support or capacity building services by M&amp;W</td>
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ANNEX 2: MAP OF UGANDA AND RESEARCH SITES IN ARUA DISTRICT
Annex 3: Field Questionnaire Guides

Semi-Structured Interviews - Farmer Key Informants

We are interested in hearing your opinions of what your experiences have been like with the AMI project. We would like to start off by asking you about your farmer group.

1. When did you start participating in the AMI project?
2. Is your farmer group still operating?
3. What is your position in the farmer group? For how long have you been in this position?
4. Do you feel that belonging to the farmer group has been helpful to the members?
   a. If so, what have been the benefits for members of belonging to this farmer group?
   b. Has belonging to the group created any negative effects for members?
5. What new ways of farming sesame did the AMI project train the farmer group members in?
   a. How many of the farmers do you think still use these [techniques, technologies] for farming sesame?
   b. Have farmers used these skills in the farming of other crops?
6. What kind of training in agricultural management did farmer group members receive from the AMI project [record keeping, financial management, marketing and storage management]?
   a. How many of the farmers do you think still use these [techniques, skills]?
   b. Have farmers used these skills in the farming and selling of other crops?
7. If farmers want to, are they able to still access services such as farming or management training?
8. Do farmers sell sesame in the market individually or collectively as a group?
   a. What about for other family crops?
9. Do you think collective marketing of sesame (is/has been, was) a good thing? Why?
   (Probing: Has it been better than selling sesame individually?)
   a. What about for other family crops (if applicable)?
10. Are farmer group members able to purchase necessary inputs such as seeds and tools?
    a. Has this changed since the project started?
    b. In the past two farming cycles, have farmer group members experienced any difficulties in buying inputs?
11. Has your farmer group been able to negotiate better prices when selling sesame?
    a. What about for other family crops?
b. Has this changed since the project started?
c. In the past two farming cycles, have farmer group members experienced any difficulties in selling crops?

12. Has the average yield per acre of sesame of farmer group members increased, decreased or stay the same since the project started?
   a. Has this changed in the past two farming cycles?

13. Has the quantity of your group’s sesame sales increased, decreased or stayed the same since the project started?
   a. What about for other crops?
   b. Has this changed in the past two farming cycles?

14. Do you know of any farmers in your group that dropped out? If so, do you know why they dropped out?

**Now we would like to hear about your opinions of women’s experiences in your group.**

15. During the project, how many members of your farmer group were women?
    a. Since the project ended, has women’s membership increased, decreased, or stayed the same?
    b. If so, why do you think this is?

16. During the project, do you think male farmers supported women’s participation in the groups? If so, how?
    a. Since the project ended, has this changed in any way?
    b. If so, why do you think this is?

17. What kinds of leadership positions did women hold in the farmer groups during the project?
    a. Since the project ended, has this changed in any way?
    b. If so, why do you think this is?

18. Since becoming members, do you think women have changed anything in how the farmer groups work? If so, how?

19. In the farmer groups how are (were) women’s ideas and interests considered when making decisions?

20. What are women’s experiences when they go to the market?
    a. What are the major challenges they face?

21. What would you have changed in this project to have made it better?
Semi-Structured Interview – Women

We are interested in hearing your opinions of what your experiences have been like with the AMI project. We would like to start by asking you about how your participation in the farmer group has affected you and your family.

1. When did you start participating in the AMI project?

2. During the AMI project, did you participate in collective marketing?
   a. If no, then why not?
   *If Yes, then ask Q#3:

3. Did the collective marketing in the AMI project help you and your family to earn more income?

4. Since the AMI project started, how have you used money you earned (i.e. did you purchase an item like jewelry, pay school fees, buy more food, etc)?
   a. Since the project started, have you been able to buy more, less or the same amount of important things you need?

5. Has participating in the AMI project created any negative effects for you or your family?
   a. What did you do about these negative effects?

6. Are there other productive activities besides farming that you are involved in (raising livestock, selling crafts, etc)?
   a. Did your participation in the AMI project affect these other activities? If so, how?

Now we would like to hear about your opinions of how your family makes decisions about farming activities.

7. What kinds of decisions do you make about sesame farming activities (e.g. use of your time, agricultural tools, what crops to plant, where to plant, what technology to use, sale and purchase of inputs)?
   a. Is this different for other family crops?

8. How are decisions about sesame farming activities made? Do you make these decisions by yourself, with your husband or with others (if others, who are they)?
   a. Is this different for other family crops?
   b. Has this changed in any way since the project started?

9. How are decisions made about the sale of sesame in the market? Do you make these decisions by yourself, with your husband or with others (if others, who are they)?
   a. Is this different for other family crops?
   b. Has this changed in any way since the project started?
10. You have told us about some of the types of decisions you help to make in farming activities and in selling crops in the market. Do you think other women in your community are also involved in making these decisions? If not, why?

11. If you could, would you like to be involved in making other decisions about farming activities?

12. What would you have changed in this project to have made it better?

Now we would like to hear about your opinions of how your family buys and sells important things.

13. What kinds of important things do you use that your family owns (Probing: land plots, agricultural equipment, radios, bicycles or other things)?
   a. Since the AMI project started, have you been able to use more, less or the same things? Can you tell us more about this?

14. On what kinds of things do you or your family spend the money that you earn?
   a. For each of these items (we ask only about the large or important items), who makes the decision to spend the money on it (you, your husband, both you and your husband, others in your family)?
   b. Since the AMI project started, have there been changes in how much you have participated in making these decisions?

15. Who makes decisions to sell large and important things, you, your husband, both of you, others in your family? (probing: land plots, agricultural equipment and livestock)
   a. Since the AMI project started, have there been changes in how much you have participated in making these decisions?

16. What would you have changed in this project to make it better?
Semi-Structured Interview - Men

We are interested in hearing your opinions of what your experiences have been like with the AMI project. We would like to start by asking you about how your participation in the farmer group affected you and your family.

1. When did you start participating in the AMI project?

2. During the AMI project, did you participate in collective marketing?
   a. If no, then why not?

If Yes, then ask Q#3:

3. Has the collective marketing introduced by the AMI project help you and your family to earn more income?

4. Since the AMI project started, how did you use money you earned (i.e. to pay school fee, buy more food, etc)?
   a. Since the project started, have you been able to buy more, less or the same amount of important things you or your family need?

5. Has participating in the AMI project created any negative effects for you or your family?
   a. What did you do about these negative effects?

6. Are there other productive activities besides farming that you are involved in (raising livestock, selling crafts, etc)?
   a. Did your participation in the AMI project affect these other activities? If so, how?

Now we would like to hear about your opinions of how your family buys and sells important things.

7. How are decisions made about the sale of sesame in the market?
   a. Who makes decisions in your family (you, your wife, both, others in the family, the farmer group)?
   b. Has this changed since the project started?

8. Since the project started, what kinds of large or important items has your family bought and/or sold?
   a. For the items bought, who usually makes the decision to buy it (you, your wife, both you and your husband, others in your family)?
   b. For the items sold, who usually makes the decision to sell it (you, your wife, both you and your husband, others in your family)?
   c. Has this changed since the project started?

9. What would you have changed in this project to make it better?
Semi-Structured Interview - CARE/AMI Staff

We are interested in hearing your opinions of what your experiences have been like with the AMI project. The majority of these questions are about how the AMI project addressed women’s empowerment and gender equality.

1. What is your understanding of CARE’s gender policy regarding its agriculture and natural resources programs?

2. What is your understanding of gender issues in Uganda?

3. What do you understand gender equality to mean in the context of the AMI project?

4. How did AMI support women’s participation (in farmer groups, marketing, and decision making)?
   a. How did the staff attempt to empower women in the context of local norms?

5. How were women’s own voices incorporated into the AMI project?

6. How did AMI incorporate men in its various efforts to empower women?

7. How did AMI support women’s ability to negotiate with men about decision making regarding household resources?
   a. How did AMI’s support of women impact intra-household relations?

8. How did AMI build partner organization capacity in gender equality and women’s empowerment?
   a. How were gender awareness trainings, peer coaching, or shared learning events implemented across AMI project sites and/or with other projects to increase knowledge about gender equality concerns?
   b. What were some of the main lessons learned from these trainings/events?
   c. How did AMI ensure that these lessons learned were implemented?

9. Did the AMI project implement any changes during the course of the project in order to better address gender equality and women’s empowerment?
   a. Did the AMI project strengthen its Monitoring and Evaluation system to track changes in gender equality?
   b. Specifically, was gender disaggregated data collected?
   c. Were gender- or women-specific indicators monitored? (Probing: input, output, and outcome levels)

10. What role did staff turnover play in AMI’s approaches to gender equality and women’s empowerment?
    a. Was turnover higher for men or women? Why?

11. During the course of the AMI project, were there times at which AMI lacked sufficient resources to carry out gender programming? (For example: financial and human resources)
a. If so, was AMI able to make necessary adjustments in order to effectively meet the gender objectives?

12. In what areas did the project positively impact women or gender equality? Please explain.

13. In what areas was the project less successful in impacting women or gender equality?
   a. What were the major challenges to achieving gender equality?
   b. What were examples of how AMI tried to deal with these challenges?
Semi-Structured Interview - Nilepro Staff

We are interested in hearing your opinions of what your experiences have been like with the AMI project. The majority of these questions are about how the AMI project addressed women’s empowerment and gender equality.

1. Can you explain your role in the AMI project and how you collaborated with CARE to implement project activities?

2. What do you understand women’s empowerment to mean in the context of the AMI project?

3. How did Nilepro staff support women’s participation (in farmer groups, marketing, and decision making)?
   a. How did Nilepro staff attempt to empower women in the context of local norms?

4. How were women’s own voices incorporated into the AMI project?

5. How did the AMI project incorporate men in its various efforts to empower women?

6. How did the AMI project support women’s ability to negotiate with men about decision making regarding household resources?
   a. How did the AMI project’s support of women impact intra-household relations?

7. How did AMI build Nilepro’s organizational capacity in gender equality and women’s empowerment?
   a. Were you involved in any gender awareness or peer-learning trainings? If so, please explain.
   b. What were some of the main lessons you learned from these trainings?
   c. How did the AMI project try to ensure that these lessons learned were implemented?
Group Discussions- Women

Version 1: first set of questions

We are interested in hearing your opinions of what your experiences have been like with the AMI project. We will start by asking about the different ways that the AMI project affected you and your farmer group.

If the farmer groups have not disbanded:

1. When did you start participating in the AMI project?

2. Do you feel that belonging to the farmer group has been helpful for you?
   a. If so, what have been the benefits of belonging to this farmer group?
   b. Has belonging to the group created any negative effects?

3. What new skills for farming sesame did the AMI project train you in?
   a. Do you still use these [techniques, technologies] to farm sesame?

4. What kinds of training in agricultural management did you receive from the AMI project [record keeping, financial management, marketing and storage management]?
   a. Do you still use these skills in the farmer groups?

5. If you want to, are you able to access services such as farming or management training?
   a. Has this changed at all since the project started?

6. Do you sell sesame in the market individually or collectively as a group?

7. Do you think collective marketing of sesame (is/has been, was) a good thing? Why?
   (Probing: Has it been better than selling sesame individually?)

8. Are you able to purchase necessary inputs such as seeds and tools?
   a. Has this changed since the project started?
   b. In the past two farming cycles have you experienced any difficulties in buying inputs?

9. Has your farmer group been able to negotiate better prices when selling sesame?
   a. Has this changed since the project started?
   b. In the past two farming cycles has your farmer group experienced any difficulties in selling?

10. Has your average yield per acre for sesame increased, decreased or stayed the same since the project started?
    a. Has this changed in the past two farming cycles?

11. Has the quantity of your group’s sesame sales increased, decreased or stayed the same since the project started?
    a. Has this changed in the past two farming cycles?
12. Do you know of any farmers in your group that dropped out? If so, do you know why they dropped out?

**If the farmer groups have disbanded:**

1. When did you start participating in the AMI project? (either ask them when they think they started participating in the project, or tell them to think about a certain number of years ago)

2. In your opinion, why did the farmer marketing group disband?

3. Before it disbanded, do you think the farmer group was helpful for you?
   a. If so, what were the benefits of belonging to this farmer group?
   b. Did belonging to the group create any negative effects?

4. What new skills for farming sesame did the AMI project train you in?
   a. Do you still use these [techniques, technologies] to farm sesame?

5. What kinds of training in agricultural management did you receive from the AMI project [record keeping, financial management, marketing and storage management]?
   a. Do you still use these skills in the farmer groups?
   b. Do you use these skills in selling other family crops?

6. If you want to, are you able to access services such as farming or management training?
   a. Has this changed at all since the group disbanded?

7. Do you think collective marketing of sesame was a good thing while you were in the project? Why?

8. Are you able to purchase necessary inputs such as seeds and tools?
   a. Has this changed since the group disbanded?
   b. In the past two farming cycles have you experienced any difficulties in buying inputs?

9. How has the disbanding of the farmer group affected the prices at which you are able to sell your crops?

10. Has your average yield per acre for sesame increased, decreased or stayed the same since the farmer group disbanded?
    a. Has this changed in the past two farming cycles?

11. Has the quantity of your individual sesame sales increased, decreased or stayed the same since the group disbanded?
    a. Has this changed in the past two farming cycles?
Group Discussions - Women

Version 2: second set of questions

We are interested in hearing your opinions of what your experiences have been like with the AMI project. We will start off by asking about women’s role in the farmer groups.

1. When did you start participating in the AMI project?

2. Are you currently a member in a farmer group?
   a. During the project, did the number of women members in the farmer groups increase, decrease or stay the same?
   b. What about since the project ended?
   c. Why do you think this is?

3. During the project, do you think many women were leaders in the groups or the marketing committees?
   a. Since the project ended, has the number of women leaders increased, decreased or stayed the same? Why do you think this is?

4. Please describe what activities you do in sesame farming.

5. Has the way you view your ability to do farming activities changed since you have been involved in the project? If so, how?

Now we would like to ask you about your experience with the AMI and Nilepro staff.

6. What was it like for you when you talked with the AMI/Nilepro staff?

7. Did AMI/Nilepro staff ask you for your ideas and opinions during the project? If so, do you think they used your ideas?

8. Do you think AMI/Nilepro staff supported women to become leaders of farmer groups?

9. During the trainings the farmer group received (from the AMI/Nilepro staff), did you discuss men’s and women’s roles in farming activities? If so, can you describe what you discussed?

Next we would like to ask you about how the project affected you and your family.

10. Do you feel that your husbands and other men in the farmer groups supported you to be in the groups?
    a. Did they support you to participate in the groups (e.g. speak, share ideas, be leaders)? If so, how?
11. Can we talk about making decisions in your family? Do you think you can make more, less or the same amount of decisions as you did when the project started?
   a. [If they say more] Do you think the AMI project helped you to be able to make more decisions in your family? If so, how?
   b. Do you think the AMI project created problems in your family? If so, how did it create these problems?

12. Do you think the AMI project tried to work with men in the community to change their opinion of women as farmers?

13. What would you have changed in this project to have made it better?

Now we would like to ask you about what it's like to be a woman farmer in these groups.

14. Do (did, if disbanded) the male farmers listen to your ideas and your interests? Do (did) you feel comfortable speaking among the male farmers in meetings? Has (Did) this changed since the project started?

15. How are decisions made among members in the farmer groups? Has this changed since the project started?
**Group Discussions - Men**

**Version 1: first set of questions**

*We are interested in hearing your opinions of what your experiences have been like with the AMI project. We will start by asking about the different ways that the AMI project affected you and your farmer group.*

*If the farmer groups have not disbanded:*

1. When did you start participating in the AMI project?
2. Do you feel that belonging to the farmer group has been helpful to you? If so, why?
3. What new skills for farming sesame did the AMI project train you in?
   a. Do you still use these [techniques, technologies] to farm sesame?
4. What kind of training in agricultural management did you receive from the AMI project [record keeping, financial management, marketing and storage management]?
   a. Do you still use these skills in the farmer groups?
5. If you want to, are you able to access services such as farming or management training?
   a. Has this changed at all since the project started?
6. Do you sell sesame in the market individually or collectively as a group?
7. Do you think collective marketing of sesame (is/has been, was) a good thing? Why?
   (Probing: Has it been better than selling sesame individually?)
8. Are you able to purchase necessary inputs such as seeds and tools?
   a. Has this changed since the project started?
   b. In the past two farming cycles have you experienced any difficulties in buying inputs?
9. Has your farmer group been able to negotiate better prices when selling sesame?
   a. Has this changed since the project started?
   b. In the past two farming cycles has your farmer group experienced any difficulties in selling?
10. Has your average yield per acre for sesame increased, decreased or stayed the same since the project started?
    a. Has this changed in the past two farming cycles?
11. Has the quantity of your group’s sesame sales increased, decreased or stayed the same since the project started?
    a. Has this changed in the past two farming cycles?
12. Do you know of any farmers in your group that dropped out? Do you know why they dropped out?
Now we would like to ask you about the role of women in farmer groups.

13. Do you think women have changed anything in how the farmer groups work since becoming members? If so, how?

14. In the farmer groups how are women’s ideas and interests considered when making decisions?

15. What would you have changed in this project to have made it better?

If the farmer groups have disbanded:

1. When did you start participating in the AMI project?

2. In your opinion, why did the farmer marketing group disband?

3. Did you consider the farmer group helpful before it disbanded?
   a. If so, what were the benefits of belonging to this farmer group?
   b. Did belonging to the group create any negative effects?

4. What new ways of farming sesame did the AMI project train you in?
   a. Do you still use these [techniques, technologies] to farming sesame?
   b. Do you use these skills in the farming of other family crops?

5. What kind of training in agricultural management did you receive from the AMI project [record keeping, financial management, marketing and storage management]?
   a. Do you still use these [techniques, skills]?
   b. Do you use these skills in the farming and selling of other family crops?

6. If you want to, are you able to access services such as farming or management training?
   a. Has this changed at all since the group disbanded?

7. If you want to, are you able to access services such as farming or management training?
   a. Has this changed at all since the group disbanded?

8. Do you sell sesame in the market individually or collectively as a group?
   a. What about for other family crops?
   b. Has this changed since the group disbanded?

9. Do you think collective marketing of sesame (is/has been, was) a good thing? Why?
   a. What about for other family crops?

10. Are you able to purchase necessary inputs such as seeds and tools?

11. Has this changed since the group disbanded?

12. In the past two farming cycles have you experienced any difficulties in buying inputs?
13. How has the disbanding of the farmer groups affected the prices you are able to get when selling your crops?

14. Has your average yield per acre for sesame increased, decreased or stayed the same since the group disbanded?
   a. Has this changed in the past two farming cycles?

15. Has the quantity of your group’s sesame sales increased, decreased or stayed the same since the group disbanded?
   a. What about for other family crops?
   b. Has this changed in the past two farming cycles?

16. What would you have changed in this project to have made it better?
**Group Discussions- Men**

*Version 2: second set of questions*

*We are interested in hearing your opinions of what your experiences have been like with the AMI project. We will start off by asking about women’s role in the farmer groups.*

1. When did you start participating in the AMI project? (either ask them when they think they started participating in the project, or tell them to think about a certain number of years ago)

2. During the project, did the number of women members in the farmer groups increase, decrease or stay the same?
   a. What about since the project ended?
   b. Why do you think this is?

3. During the project do you think many women were leaders in the groups or the marketing committees?
   a. Since the project started, has the number of women leaders increased, decreased or stayed the same?
   b. What about since the project ended?
   c. Why do you think this is?

4. What do you think about women being involved in the farmer groups?
   a. What do you think about women being leaders in the farmer groups or the marketing committees? (Probing: What do you think is good or bad about women’s involvement in the groups?)

5. What do you think about women’s abilities to do sesame farming activities?
   a. Are these views different from the ones you held before the project started?

*Now we would like to ask you about your experience with the AMI and Nilepro staff.*

6. During the trainings the farmer group received (from the Nilepro staff), did the staff discuss men’s and women’s roles in farming activities? If so, can you describe what you discussed?

7. Do you think the AMI project tried to work with you to change your opinion of women as farmers?

8. Did the AMI staff talk to you about the role of men and women in making decisions within the family?
   a. If so, what did you discuss?
   b. Did this change your opinion about the roles of men and women?
   c. Has it changed the way you make decisions in your family? If so, how?
9. Do you think the AMI project created problems in your family? If so, how did it create these problems?

10. What would you have changed in this project to have made it better?
**PRA- Resource Cards**

a. Ask the participants to introduce themselves ~ name, anything interesting they want to share

b. Introduce yourself to the group - Tell them who we are, what we are doing, and how they can help us (create a standard language for introduction for facilitators to be used in all the activities and interviews)

c. Ask them when they started participating in the AMI project (either ask them when they think they started participating in the project, or tell them to think about a certain number of years ago)

d. Place the three large drawings, one of a man, one of a woman, and one of a man and woman together, on the ground in a row with adequate room between them.

e. Underneath these drawings scatter the cards, each picturing a different resource, at random. Include some blank cards so that participants can draw/write other resources.

f. Split the group into groups of 5-6 women each.

g. Ask the participants to sort the cards by placing them under the appropriate large drawings, depending on who uses the resource, whether women, men or both.

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**Facilitator:**

"The purpose of this exercise is to get a better understanding of who in the family is able to use resources such as land, livestock and agricultural tools. As you can see, we have here drawings of a wife by herself, a husband by himself and a wife and husband together. We also have several cards on which we’ve put drawings of different resources. Please take some time now to discuss and come to an agreement within your groups about which drawings to place the cards under depending on who uses the resource in your family. Only place a resource card under the picture of the husband and wife together when that resource is used the same amount, otherwise put the resource card under the person who uses that resource the most. Just to be clear, we are only focusing on the use of resources right now. For example, if only your husband uses bicycle then place the picture of the bicycle under the picture of the man. Or if you and your husband both use a hoe almost the same amount then place the picture of a hoe under the picture of a man and woman together.

Also, if there are other resources that you can think of that are not here, please draw or write that resource onto one of the blank cards."

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**Discussion Questions (facilitator):**

1. Can you explain why you put some of the resources where you did?

2. Would any of you have placed any cards differently than what the group decided on? Why?
a. Then put the second set of drawings and cards on the ground, close by to the first set. Repeat the exercise but this time focus on who has control, ownership or decision making power concerning each resource.
b. Facilitate the discussion among the participants about why they made the choices they did.

Facilitator:

“Please take some time now to discuss and come to an agreement within your groups about which drawings to place the cards under, depending on who controls the resource in your family. By control we mean who makes decisions about each resource. These decisions can be about using, buying, or selling the resource. Only place a resource card under the picture of the husband and wife together when that resource is controlled the same amount, otherwise put the resource card under the person who controls that resource the most. For example, if only your husband decides who can use the bicycle then place the picture of the bicycle under the picture of the man. Or if you and your husband both decide which station to play on the radio then place the picture of a radio under the picture of a man and woman together.

Again, if there are other resources that you can think of that are not here, please draw or write that resource onto one of the blank cards.”

Control Discussion Questions (facilitator):

1. Can you explain why you put some of the resources where you did?

2. Would any of you have placed any cards differently than what the group decided on? Why?

Use and Control Discussion Questions (facilitator):

1. Can you explain the differences you see between who uses some resources and who controls some resources?

2. Since you were involved in the project, have these things changed? (For example: Are more resources used by both you and your husband now than before the project started? Or do you have more control over any resources now than you did before?)
**PRA- Trend Analysis**

a. Ask the participants to introduce themselves ~ name, any thing interesting they want to share

b. Introduce yourself to the group - Tell them who we are, what we are doing, and how they can help us (create a standard language for introduction for facilitators to be used in all the activities and interviews)

**Facilitator**

“In this activity, we would like to hear about some of the most important basic needs that you have. Please take some time now to discuss and come to an agreement as a group about the top 5 basic needs for you and your family.

Time elapsed ....

Now please write the name of or draw a symbol of the 5 needs that your group came up with on the top row of the chart (for example, a need might be a house or a shelter, so you can either draw a picture of a house or write the word “house” on the top row of the

**c. Conduct a Pairwise ranking** as specified below:

**Facilitator**

“This activity is about choosing between two different things. We want to see which need is more important to you than another need. To do this, I will read two needs at a time. Raise your hands to show which one of the two needs you think is more important. For example, between a house and seeds, you will raise your hand if you feel that the house is a more important basic need to you than seeds. However, if you think that seeds are more important than the house, raise your hands when I say seed is more important than a house. Now let’s start.”

(Read two needs at a time until all pairs have been read, each time asking participants to vote for choice. Note down the number of people who raise hand for each need, and at the end, total up the votes for each need)
Example chart:
(Between food and healthcare, 8 people raised their hands for food and 2 for healthcare. Between food and seeds for agri. 5 raised their hands for food and 5 for seeds; between food and shelter, 8 selected food and 2 shelter; between food and water, 2 selected food and 8 water. Repeat until all sets are done. Next set will start between healthcare and seeds for agri.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic Needs</th>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Healthcare</th>
<th>Seeds for agriculture</th>
<th>Shelter</th>
<th>Water</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8,5,8,2</td>
<td>2,1,1,0</td>
<td>5,9,5,5</td>
<td>2,9,5,4</td>
<td>8,10,5,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranking</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

d. Conduct Trend Analysis

Facilitator:

“Now that you have identified which needs are most important to you, in the next activity, we would like to hear about how things have changed over time in terms of your ability to meet these basic needs that you have just identified.

Can you tell us how well your basic needs are met currently? Let’s discuss the first basic need on this chart (point to the table). How well are you able to meet this need in recent times? Put 3 XXX if you are very well able to meet the need, put 2 XX if you can somewhat meet the need (for example, you can sometimes meet the need and other times have trouble), and put 1 X if it is very hard for you to meet the need. First, discuss this in your group and come to an agreement on how many XX to put on each box for the first row. Select a representative from your group to mark each box, once you have decided as a group.”

Time elapse …

“Now let’s talk about what your experience was like during the project. For each basic need what was the situation like during the project? Discuss this in your group and come to an agreement on how many XX to put on each box for the row. Have the representative from your group mark each box on the second row, once you have decided as a group.”

Time elapse …

Now think about an important event that happened in the village shortly before the AMI project started. Come to an agreement within your group about this event and mark it in the last row (show it to them).

Now let’s talk about what your experience was like around the time the event occurred. For each basic need what was the situation like around the time the event happened? Discuss this in your group and come to an agreement on how many XX to put on each box for the last row. Have the representative from your group mark each box on the second row, once you have decided as a group.”
Example of the completed basic needs table -

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Food</th>
<th>water</th>
<th>Seeds for agriculture</th>
<th>shelter</th>
<th>healthcare</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Now</strong></td>
<td>XXX</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>XXX</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>During the project</strong></td>
<td>XXX</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Before the project</strong></td>
<td>XX</td>
<td>XXX</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion Questions for Follow-up (facilitator):**

1. Looking at this chart (point to table), how has your ability to meet your basic needs changed over time? Can you explain the reasons for this change? (Probe if it is related to collective marketing – if yes then why, if no then why not)

2. How did collective marketing affect your ability to meet your basic needs? Probe: Did it affect you positively? Did it negatively affect you in anyway? How did you lessen the negative effects? Explain.